

**SCRIBES OF STORIES, TELLERS OF TALES: THE PHENOMENON OF  
COMMUNITY HISTORY IN SASKATCHEWAN**

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By

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is the first scholarly study of community history from the perspective of the communities involved in the process. In Saskatchewan, over one thousand professionally printed community-history books have been produced, in addition to the uncounted books locally copied and circulated. Each of the professional hardcover books sold an average of 800 copies, making community history, with more than 800,000 books in circulation, a popular genre in Saskatchewan. This paper analyzes 209 community histories published from 1949 to 1993 from across Saskatchewan to determine such issues as the gender and number of workers involved, the average length of the books, and their contents. Interviews with twenty-eight persons who had experience on community-history committees provide excellent supportive information on the role of women in community history, the process of a community-history project, and insights into the connection between a community history and its target audience.

This study of the phenomenon of community history in Saskatchewan argues that academic historians, to date, have misunderstood the role, purpose, and success of community history. It contends that community history serves the dual purpose first, of collecting and preserving the community story in a published format, and, second, of inspiring an accompanying oral tradition. Through an examination of the initial idea, the process, the workers, the finished product, and the community response, this thesis concludes that community history should be seen as a contribution to a community's re-creation, identification, reaffirmation and pride, rather than a contribution to the traditional historical field.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Muriel Anna Wiberg McGowan. Her contribution to community history was an inspiration to me through the entire thesis process. This thesis tells, in part, Gram's story.

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## INTRODUCTION

### A NEW DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY HISTORY

If persons were to shape their own lives, gain control over their own communities...they had first to determine for themselves who they were and where they had come from. Culturally, psychologically, socially, citizens turned to their own diverse pasts for nourishment and courage. They found themselves through the telling of stories.<sup>1</sup>

In Saskatchewan, as well as across the Canadian and American west, there has been a virtual explosion during the last fifty years in the collection and publication of community history, particularly in the form of community-history books.<sup>2</sup> As the above quote from the journal Minnesota History indicates, community history provided a way for communities to define themselves, create (or re-create) an identity, and to have a voice in the wider world. These books assuaged a deep and abiding need for a community to establish a sense of inclusion for its citizens, complete with a protective

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<sup>1</sup> Clarke Chambers, "The 'New' Social History, Local History, and Community Empowerment." Minnesota History vol. 49, no. 1, 1984. p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Neils Conzen gives a good overview of the surge in American community- and local-history creation during the Bicentennial of 1976 in her work, "Community Studies, Urban History, and American Local History" in Michael Kammen, ed., The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980). pp. 270-291.

armour against the vagaries of the outside world. As well, they catered to community pride and self-esteem, both wellsprings of "nourishment and courage." Moreover, community-history books were designed with a specific dual purpose. The first purpose was simply to collect and preserve the stories of a community in a lasting, written form. The second was to spark a new or prompt an old oral tradition. The oral tradition would retell both the stories in the books, with new emphasis and more explanation, as well as relate those stories not included, those stories that exist only in the community's oral memory. J.H. Archer, a Saskatchewan historian, made these points in 1979:

These people I speak of, your neighbours and mine, the pioneers in your local community, are the men and women of your...[community]...histories....This is the society that you write about, at the community level. This is the stuff of which epics are born and of which legends are fabricated....When you write of these people you will study the path of the homesteader, the record of the wheat grower, the reminiscences of men and women who made land, made homes, and made history. But back of these are the unpublished, half-heard dreams unfulfilled, the thoughts uncensored and the truths unpublished that clothe the printed word with character, personality and with something of the soul.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis will examine community history as it was manifested in Saskatchewan, through the entities of the community-history book, and the committees that produced the books. Up to this point, there has not been an in-depth academic analysis of the community- history phenomenon in Canada, although historians have often used

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<sup>3</sup> J.H. Archer, "Local History." Local Archives and History Conference Proceedings, 1979. pp. 21-22.

community-history books as sources for their own research.<sup>4</sup> What this thesis seeks is a new understanding of the role and purpose of a community-history book, and its relationship with its community. It aims to create a new genre -- community history -- that will help academic historians engage in a more active and informative dialogue with these valuable sources. Moreover, it hopes that by understanding the purpose and role of community history, academic historians (loosely defined as historians trained in a university or other academic setting and recognized by other scholars as having attained a professional level) who write about local and community history will cease to feel obligated to make value judgements on the kind of history contained in such a book.

To explain this thesis, and set it in a proper historiographical perspective, it is necessary to travel back to the beginning of "professional" history. This thesis is historiographically grounded by the ongoing debates between "professional" and "amateur" historians, and between practitioners of local history on the role and value of local historical studies. Up to this point, most historians have freely interchanged the words "local" and "community" history. This thesis will offer a new definition of community history, as distinct from any other historical genre.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> There has not been an academic study, but there have been a number of media articles on this phenomenon. Some of the more interesting have been "Shamrock's Runaway Best Seller" by writer Robert Collins, printed in Reader's Digest (September 1991). pp. 127-134, and three short articles by Myrna MacDonald in the May 4, 1995 issue of The Western Producer, entitled "Community history provides a valued sense of identity," "Histories often written in waves to mark event," and "Computers allow local control, higher quality." p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> In Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1989), "community" is defined as: (2) "a social group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists;" and (5) "joint possession, enjoyment, liability, etc." These definitions show that people are the main components of a community. This contrasts



Ever since the mid-nineteenth century, there have been hotly contested debates in academic circles over the purpose and value of local and amateur history. Before that time, history was a pursuit, not a subject to be learned in school, and as such was the milieu of men and women of leisure, with interest but without formal training. As the study of history gradually became formalized, and colleges began to confer degrees to those with proficiency in the growing academic field, a new breed of "professional" historians arose. These professionals sought ways to differentiate themselves from the "amateurs" and "antiquarians" who continued to work within the realm of history. Although mostly successful at creating this separation, professional historians have been frustrated in their attempts to dominate history by the perseverance of thriving non-professionals in the subject. However, these non-professionals (or amateurs, as they are often called) have generally chosen to study local history, usually for reasons of accessibility.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, professional historians were forced to distance themselves from amateurs on the basis of subject matter as well as academic standing, which resulted in close to a century of virtual academic neglect of local history.

Since the publication in the United States of Merle Curti's pathbreaking work on rural Wisconsin in 1952, professional historians have turned to "case studies" as a way

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definitions of the word "local" where place is the primary concept. Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language. (New York: Portland House, 1989). p. 298.

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph is inspired by the following books: Carl Berger, The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900 (Second Edition). (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986); Micheal Kammen, The Past Before Us; Phillipa Levine, The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

to enter into the lush research fields of local history.<sup>7</sup> Using quantitative techniques developed by the Annales and Leicester schools in Europe, local history was reborn to professional historians.<sup>8</sup> Armed with a list of questions, professional historians began to explore such issues as demographic change, family structure, social class and class relations, social and geographic mobility, social order and community conflict, and community development and disintegration.<sup>9</sup> Using statistical information gleaned from tax rolls, census forms, court records, church registers, and other documents easily found in county and town offices, professional historians were able to turn these traditionally local and amateur subjects to their own ends, and became proficient at writing the history of small localities.

With the professional historians muscling onto the scene, it would be logical to expect that amateur historians would fade into the woodwork and lose interest. However, on the contrary, since the 1950s, amateur historical work on local and community history has also exploded. This explosion of interest in the subject by both professionals and amateurs suggests four main points about local and community studies. Firstly, this interest indicates the richness of local history, with more than

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<sup>7</sup> See Conzen, "Community Studies," p. 273.

<sup>8</sup> Conzen, "Community Studies," p. 275. The Annales School in France developed a method of quantitative history that unlocked the secrets of ordinary humans in history. By sorting and linking the information in tax records, census documents, church and legal records, patient historians could make the past "speak" to them in new and exciting ways. The Leicester School in England borrowed these new methods and applied them to local history, with dramatic results. Paul Voisey, "Rural Local History and the Prairie West." R.D. Francis and Howard Palmer, The Prairie West: Historical Readings (Second Edition). (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992). pp. 498-499.

<sup>9</sup> Voisey, "Rural Local History and the Prairie West," p. 502.

enough room for both amateur and professional to flourish. Second, this outpouring of work on local and community history implies something of the popularity of the subject matter with a wider reading audience. As historian Hilda Neatby argued in 1952, "in Canada, at least, many who care for no other kind of history can be interested in the history of their locality or of their region."<sup>10</sup> Third, that professional and amateur historians can work with the same subject matter suggests that their subject might be the same, but that perhaps their approaches and their methods are different. British historian Dr. D.C. Cox made this point clearly and candidly, as quoted in an essay by Victor Skipp in the British journal, The Local Historian:

As I [Cox] see it, the local antiquarian has an independent line of activity [from the professional historians]. To ask from him a scientific appraisal of political, economic, or even social trends in his area, is like asking for cod-liver oil at a fish-and-chip saloon. The area of activity is the same; the approach is not.<sup>11</sup>

Last, it is possible that many local and amateur historians know that because of differences in method and approach, their results are radically different from professionals, and are, therefore, read by an entirely different audience than the professional local histories.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of so many people working within similar areas of research and writing, heated debates and endless controversy about local history crammed

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<sup>10</sup> "The Canadian Historical Association, the Canadian Historical Review, and Local History: A Symposium." The Canadian Historical Association Papers. 1952. p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Victor Skipp, "Local history: a new definition and its implications, Part 2." The Local Historian vol. 14, no. 7, August, 1981. pp. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion on the importance of the audience to community history, see chapter five.

professional journals. The debates struggled to define and limit the genre of local history – what "is" local history, what "is not," whether it is "good" or "bad." Connected with this controversy was a discussion of the purpose of local history. Most professional historians argued that local history should ideally be written to shed light on larger issues, whether national or general. Their quantitative methods, designed to analyze the mechanics of a community, answered such general interest questions as community development, political and social structure, organization, demography, and stability. Historians could then compare these issues to analyses of other communities to develop patterns and answer more inquiries. The focus of these studies was on the questions and the analysis – the communities were merely the vehicles to generate usable statistics.

There were, however, those who advocated the study of local history for its own sake. Quantitative analysis on "anonymous social processes and structures" would have limited appeal.<sup>13</sup> Historian David Sutherland addressed the issue this way: "The amateurs generally do not share the professional's preoccupation with issues and analysis. Their priority is not to solve problems but rather to tell a story."<sup>14</sup> David Russo, an influential academic historian who studied local history in the United States, argued that amateur historical writing is better than academic local studies because scholars lose sight of historical reality when they become too involved in "concepts,

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<sup>13</sup> Carl Berger, "Tradition and the 'New' History." The Writing of Canadian History. p. 301.

<sup>14</sup> David Sutherland, "Parish Perspectives: Recent Work in Community History Within Atlantic Canada." Acadiensis vol. 17, no. 1, Autumn, 1987. p. 144.

models, processes, and patterns."<sup>15</sup> Local history, such promoters argued, had a value of its own, eliciting interest in a simple story, simply told.

Whether these scholars advocated local history as an end in itself, or as an introduction to larger issues, all sides of the academic debate agreed that amateur local historians could benefit from the advice of professionals in the field. This agreement sparked a continuous whirlwind of pamphlets, books, and other publications aimed at educating the layperson in the correct and proper way to do local history.<sup>16</sup> The books and pamphlets gave advice on footnotes, writing style, sources, and possible subject matter.<sup>17</sup> Professionals hoped that amateurs would follow this sensible advice, in order to elevate the overall field of local history, and rescue it, in the words of Canadian historian Paul Voisey, from the "stagnant backwater" of myopic antiquarianism.<sup>18</sup> Essentially, the idea was to remake amateur local history into something more akin to what the professionals were doing, perhaps not to the extent of expensive computer-

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<sup>15</sup> Cited in Alan Rogers, "Communities, nationhood and local history: a review of the writings of David Russo." The Local Historian vol. 19, no. 1, February 1989. p. 22. Examples of David Russo's work are: David Russo, Families and Communities: A New View of American History. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1974) and Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s to 1930s (London: Greenwood Press, 1988).

<sup>16</sup> See, in particular: Hugh Dempsey, How to Prepare a Local History. (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1969); Gerald Friesen and Barry Potyondi, A Guide to the Study of Manitoba Local History. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press for the Manitoba Historical Society, 1981); Eric Holmgren, Writing Local History. (Edmonton: Historical Resources Division, Alberta Culture, 1975); D.D. Parker, Local History: How to Gather it, Write it, Publish it. (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1944); and Saskatchewan Archives Board, Exploring Local History in Saskatchewan. (Regina: Saskatchewan 1980 Diamond Jubilee Corporation, 1980).

<sup>17</sup> Although, as Paul Voisey notes in "Rural Local History," "Professional historians undoubtedly dispensed advice with good intentions, but perhaps they hesitated to write local history themselves because they vaguely sensed that following their own suggestions would result in a book unlikely to raise their professional standing" (p. 501).

<sup>18</sup> Voisey, "Rural Local History," p. 506.

generated quantitative history, but certainly to write local history with one eye on the larger historical picture, to investigate the broader concepts of social history, particularly class, ethnicity, demography, and community change. If all local historical writing could be thus "elevated" to professional standards, the academics would not have to work so hard to justify their interest in the "backwater" of local history.

Much of this advice about studying and writing "good" local history was directed at the dedicated amateur, an individual interested in local history as a lifelong pursuit. In focussing this advice on individual amateur historians, professional "advisors" neglect a small but significant portion of community historians -- the community-history committee. At least two Canadian historians, Hartwell Bowsfield and Paul Voisey, argued that community history, written by committee, was one of the worst manifestations of local-history creation. Bowsfield argued:

Probably the greatest criticism of local history writing is that no coherent picture of the community develops from the information put together. This is a failing to be expected when, as in many cases, parts of the story have been assigned as projects to individuals. The history is then a series of unconnected parts rather than a smooth-flowing narrative. "Committee" history can seldom achieve the latter. Individual organization and control of the information assembled is necessary to establish a pattern or theme to the story.<sup>19</sup>

Voisey explained even further:

Residents of rural communities...turned to the prairie tradition of cooperative enterprise....Professional historians scoffed at the results, but local history societies wrote for themselves and did not expect anyone outside the community to read their books, save former residents. And the books fulfilled local

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<sup>19</sup> Hartwell Bowsfield, "Writing Local History." Alberta Historical Review vol. 17, Summer 1969, pp. 17-18.

purposes admirably. Packed with names, landmarks, incidents, anecdotes, and pictures, they preserved grandmother's story, drew personal links between past and present, and bolstered local identity.<sup>20</sup>

However, this accurate and benevolent description of committee-style history was immediately shattered by Voisey's next statement:

It is pointless to list all the shortcomings of the community-sponsored local histories, for they commit virtually every sin known to scholarship. A more useful approach is to ask if they offer anything of value to the academic historian.<sup>21</sup>

Their value, Voisey argues, is that community histories can be "foraged" for scraps of information by scholarly historians, although this is a tedious process. He also suggests that community histories offer academics superb raw material for books on the social psychology of prairie life, of the emotional reactions of prairie residents to national issues such as the Great Depression. But he argues that "the greatest value of community-written local histories lies in their potential contribution to quantitative research....Ironically then, while community-written local histories are far inferior to existing academic ones in scholarly merit, their potential for further research may be greater."<sup>22</sup> Voisey, through these statements, is only aware of the value of the written component of community history -- he is unaware, or does not acknowledge, the oral counterhistory. Both Bowsfield and Voisey voice a rigid academic contempt for the cooperative, committee-style community history that has been so popular in many small

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<sup>20</sup> Voisey, "Rural Local History," pp. 504-505.

<sup>21</sup> Voisey, "Rural Local History," p. 505.

<sup>22</sup> Voisey, "Rural Local History," pp. 505-506.

communities across Canada, but particularly in the western provinces. This style of history writing, in their opinion, bears no resemblance to the exalted and important work of academic historians.

The essential problem with this kind of criticism is, of course, that Bowsfield, Voisey, and others judge these committee-histories by an academic standard that by Voisey's own admission, the committees do not recognize. It is inappropriate and misleading to accuse community history of not achieving a standard or style that the committees themselves did not accept. Instead, it would be far more fruitful to look at such community history from the perspective of the communities and the committees themselves, to understand what intentions, aspirations, goals, and audience they had in mind. This thesis addresses that gap in the historical record, for in studying the radically different purposes of community history, and in assessing its successes and failures, academic historians will then know how to interact with these books with creativity and understanding.

Community history, then, for the purposes of this thesis, is described as something distinct from local history (both academic and amateur local history). Although local history has no one single definition, (and indeed, no one definition on which all those within the genre can agree<sup>23</sup>), the interpretation given by Donald

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<sup>23</sup> The pages of such journals as The Local Historian are full of disagreement over any single, acceptable definition of local history. The disagreements escalated with the Blake Report of 1979, a report on the state of local history in England. Lord Blake, Provost of Queen's College, Oxford, headed a committee that made assessments of the interest and activity in local history in England and Wales, and recommendations for the support of such efforts. The report defined local history as "the study of man's past in relation to his locality; locality being determined by an individual's interests and experience," a definition that sounds much like the Webster's explanation of "community." In the wake of the report, attacks were launched on the committee's interpretation of local history, and the controversy has continued. This thesis offers a definition only with



Simpson in his pathbreaking essay, "Ivy-Mantled Tower and Settler's Cabin" is the most useful:

Local history is a broad term. It can include chronicles of events, re-creations of social life, biography, the records of institutions, economic factors, transport, industrial archaeology, the work of the press, and many other aspects. It can range from the basic account of a village to the detailed study of a town, city, or a region, with a growing complexity of administrative pattern and of social forces. Its sources can be extremely diverse.<sup>24</sup>

This definition, which is applicable to both academic and amateur local history, contrasts with Paul Voisey's delineation which tersely covers a specific, "international," academic standard of local history: Voisey posits: "superior local history, then, has limited and definite purposes, shuns events, and individuals in favour of structures and groups, and is interdisciplinary in theme and method...."<sup>25</sup> To add to these definitions, it is apparent that local history is usually accomplished by an individual working alone, incorporating the research into a single, cohesive narrative, generally with a logical argument or thesis.

In contrast, community history, certainly in western Canada and more particularly, Saskatchewan, the chosen area of study, is defined in this thesis as something usually cultivated by groups, working within committees to solicit and collect

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considerable academic risk. See "Committee to Review Local History: Summary of Report." The Local Historian vol. 13, no. 8, November 1979. pp. 451-456; Philip Riden, "The Blake Report: a personal reaction." The Local Historian vol. 14, no. 1, February 1980. pp. 18-23; and D. Huw Owen, "The Blake Report: another view." The Local Historian vol. 14, no. 2, May 1980. pp. 91-92.

<sup>24</sup> Donald Simpson, "Ivy-Mantled Tower and Settler's Cabin: Some Thoughts on Local History in Britain and Canada" British Journal of Canadian Studies vol. 1, no. 1, 1986. p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Voisey, "Rural Local History," p. 503.

a cooperative, inclusive history. This type of history is rarely concerned with academic concepts and analysis, but rather with individuals, events, and places. Community history asks "when," "who," and "how" rather than "why." The committees' methods are radically different from the individuals who perform local history (although no doubt both amateur local historians and collective committees share many of the same motivations). Community history, inspired by a community's desire to express and define itself, is written by the people, about the people, and for the people of a community -- a distinct authorship, a distinct subject, and a distinct audience from academic local history.

It is interesting to note that both local history and community history both rely on the term "history." The difference is that in local history, the word "history" is of paramount importance. In community history, the key word is "community." The ultimate goal of a local history is a contribution to history that uses a local area as its main source of information, instruction, enlightenment, and inspiration. Community history, on the other hand, as this thesis will explain, is a contribution to community, that is inspired, instructed, and informed by, but not limited to, history.

How does a researcher study community history? Ironically, one of the best methods borrows some techniques from quantitative history. Part of this research project involved analyzing a sample of community-history books from across the province of Saskatchewan. A total of 209 history books chosen randomly from the shelves of the Local History Room of the Saskatoon Public Library -- Frances Morrison

Branch served as the study group.<sup>26</sup> (See Table 1.1, page 14). Over one thousand professionally printed histories have been produced in this province, in addition to the uncounted books from the 1950s and 1960s that were locally mimeographed and distributed. Multiply that figure by 800, the average number of books printed per community, and it becomes apparent that community-history books have carved a tremendous niche for themselves, at over 800,000 books in this province alone.<sup>27</sup>

Table 1.1. Community Histories Used in this Study, Number by Year, Saskatchewan, 1949-1993.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>
1949	2	1964	1	1979	11
1950	1	1965	0	1980	17
1951	0	1966	1	1981	15
1952	0	1967	9	1982	14
1953	0	1968	2	1983	14
1954	0	1969	2	1984	14
1955	12	1970	0	1985	9
1956	2	1971	3	1986	10
1957	0	1972	2	1987	7
1958	0	1973	1	1988	8
1959	0	1974	0	1989	7
1960	3	1975	3	1990	7
1961	0	1976	5	1991	5
1962	0	1977	4	1992	6
1963	2	1978	10	1993	2
				<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>

<sup>26</sup> These numbers are a close approximation of the "waves" of community-history production, a discussion of which follows in Chapter one. There was a surge in the 1950s (around 1955); another surge near the Canadian centennial of 1967; then a slow growth to the explosion, beginning in 1978, of professionally published, committee-style community histories that have dominated the last two decades, an explosion which began to subside somewhat in the mid-to-late 1980s.

<sup>27</sup> These numbers were suggested by Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers. Merle Massie Private Collection, (hereafter cited as MMPC), Interview with Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

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Source: Sample, community-history books, Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library, Frances Morrison Branch, winter 1996.

These numbers reflect the incredible popularity of these efforts, and the colossal response of ordinary people to an appreciation of their own story.

Each book used in the study was scrutinized in detail, to analyze such issues as: the gender composition of the committees; the length of the book; the publisher and printer (if professionally printed); the size of the area in consideration; dominant ethnic group (if applicable); year of publication; and also subjects included in each book. The principal subject categories were as follows: introductions and acknowledgements, as well as dedications; town or community history; early pioneer history; native history in the area; agriculture; local government; elevators and mills; livestock; banks; schools; churches; hospitals and health care; businesses; homestead maps; military service; transportation and communication; sports; clubs and organizations; and, most importantly, family histories. I transferred the information from these and other categories of interest to a fill-in-the-blank form, one for each book. These forms helped to develop a computer database for the information, using the program Quattro Pro. A computer database program allows analysis of trends and patterns, such as the percentage of women who worked on community-history committees, or the difference in the topics covered in the history books in one decade as compared to another. Of course, such quantitative analysis of "facts" is only a historical tool -- historical truth is no more guaranteed using this than other methods. The usefulness of such an approach depends completely on the weaknesses and strengths of the sources used

to generate the information, and on the kinds of questions asked.<sup>28</sup> However, the quantitative approach is an excellent way to flesh out a few major trends and interesting points to corroborate with other sources.

Another excellent method of studying community history is to interview people who worked on community-history committees. Again, there are strengths and weaknesses to this technique. Twenty-eight people from across Saskatchewan (from Oxbow to Paddockwood, from Esterhazy to Cactus Lake) volunteered to be interviewed for this project. Early in the assignment, I placed notices in several newspapers across the province requesting voluntary interviews with people who had worked on community-history committees. The response was quite heartwarming, and throughout the summer and fall of 1995, most of these interviews took place. These discussions, once transcribed, formed much of the heart of the thesis, for the interviewees responded to such questions as: how did the project come about?; what jobs needed to be done?; how and why did you join the committee?; what gender issues were apparent?; and who was your target audience and why?. Most of these people responded with unbridled enthusiasm, and the interviews ran for well over an hour in many cases. Some people, however, were more reticent, worried that their opinions and mine would be incompatible. This kind of reticence, of course, is one of the problems of oral-history research – there is always a concern that the respondents will only say what they think

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<sup>28</sup> In this thesis, the statistically generated information hinged on the number of books studied in an individual year – if only seven books were used, the reliability of the results could be very different than if fifty books were analyzed. As well, the random sampling method meant that some years were not "typical" – for example, there were no books printed by Friesen Printers evaluated for the year 1979, although they were avidly pursuing community-history printing work in that year.

the interviewer wants to hear.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, as in the quantitative approach, oral history is bound by the questions that are asked, a fact which could hinder the amount of acceptable information brought out by the interview process. But, oral interviews were one of the best ways to access human-interest information, about thoughts, feelings, successes, and disappointments concerning community history projects.

In studying over 200 community histories, it became apparent that the histories could yield more than statistical information to the researcher. In the introductions, prefaces, and dedications, many books sought to explain the purpose of community history, the need for it, the process, and the audience -- all questions to which this thesis endeavours to respond. Through the stories and statements contained in these introductions, the research gained access to insights not established using other methods. Moreover, this information helped fill the gaps for towns, villages, and school districts all across the province where oral interviews were missing.

One interesting point about this project was that it had an incredible, near universal interest in small-town Saskatchewan. It would be remiss not to mention the many informal conversations about this thesis conducted with strangers in grocery stores, in apartment hallways, on the street, and at agricultural and crop production shows. Almost every rural or small-town Saskatchewan citizen has been exposed, at

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<sup>29</sup> For a scholarly introduction to the advantages and disadvantages of oral history, see Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History. (New York: Routledge, 1991). For a discussion of the importance of oral history for local and community historians, see: Elizabeth Roberts, "Oral History and the Local Historian." The Local Historian vol. 13, no. 7, August 1979. pp. 408-416; and Howard Newby, "The Dangers of Reminiscence." The Local Historian vol. 10, no. 6, May 1973. pp. 334-339. The connection between memory and history is explored in a collection of articles edited by Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994).

some point, to these books, and nearly all of the people whom I engaged in conversation gave a supportive comment or insightful opinion about the subject. Of course, the thesis cannot include these informal conversations, but it is important to acknowledge the support and interest, and the ideas, that have helped to shape the research and the thesis.

Although most of the secondary historical literature used for this thesis examined local, not community, history, there were a few exceptions. In particular, the flood of community history in Canada obligated researchers of the Canadian local-history scene to mention and comment on the phenomenon. In 1952, the Canadian Historical Association sponsored a symposium on Canadian local history that marked one of the first acknowledgements of the role of community history. Hartwell Bowsfield published "Writing Local History" in the Alberta Historical Review in 1969. In this work, he spoke of the problem of consistency and coherency of thought and argument in a committee-written community history. Political scientist David Smith's work on prairie celebrations (such as the Golden Jubilee and Celebrate Saskatchewan) is an interesting account that documented the political background of these celebrations, and looked at some of the outside forces at work that have encouraged the creation of community history. Historian Royce MacGillivray of Ontario published an article that looked at community and local history in Ontario as a form of popular culture. He examined such issues as research costs, authorship, companionship, interest in myth, nostalgia, patriotism, the search for roots and a human desire for personal fame in order to determine some of the motives for producing a local history. Historian David Sutherland published a

review of community histories in Atlantic Canada, a paper that proves the universal appeal of community history. As well, historian Carl Berger's tour de force work on English-Canadian historiographical trends had some intriguing and insightful comments on the conflict between professional and amateur historians in Canada, as well as a refreshingly supportive examination of popular history.<sup>30</sup>

But the two historians whose writing and opinions have most influenced this thesis are Donald Simpson and Paul Voisey.<sup>31</sup> Simpson's essay for the first issue of the British Journal of Canadian Studies recognized the role of women in Canada as primary keepers of the historical past of small communities. Voisey's work on local history in Canada and particularly in the prairie West, however, has had the greatest impact on this thesis, and his work elicits strong and adverse feelings throughout the following pages. His work is frustrating because although he seems to understand that community history serves a radically different purpose than academic local history and writes for a completely different audience, he then chooses to ignore those very crucial points. His primary concern is what community histories can offer for academic historians to "exploit." While it is of course acceptable, and desirable, for academic historians to use community histories as historical sources, it is unacceptable for

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<sup>30</sup> "The Canadian Historical Association, The Canadian Historical Review, and Local History: A Symposium;" Berger, The Writing of Canadian History; Bowsfield, "Writing Local History;" Royce MacGillivray, "Local History as a Form of Popular Culture in Ontario," New York History vol. 65, October, 1984. pp. 367-377; David Smith, "Celebrations and History on the Prairies," Journal of Canadian Studies vol. 17, no. 3., Fall 1982. pp. 45-57; and, Sutherland, "Parish Perspectives: Recent Work in Community History Within Atlantic Canada."

<sup>31</sup> Simpson, "Ivy-Mantled Tower and Settler's Cabin;" Paul Voisey, "Local History in Canada." Locus vol. 1, no. 2, 1989. pp. 1-11; and Voisey, "Rural Local History and the Prairie West."



academics to dismiss community histories as only worthy of the perjorative label of exploitation. It is elitist and completely inappropriate to damn community history for not doing what it never intended to do in the first place. This thesis is intended as the first step in educating academic historians about community history, and perhaps blunting the thrust of other inappropriate comments.

Community-history committees, and the communities themselves, used the medium of the community-history book to reach for something beyond mere local or general historical knowledge. This thesis will argue that these books, through their creation within a community, their scope and subject matter, and through their audience and the response they commanded, were specifically designed as vehicles of community creation and re-creation, reaffirmation, cooperativeness, identity, and pride. Each chapter will describe a part of that process. Chapter one examines the idea behind the creation of the books, and the desire that was kindled in each community to have its own voice. Chapter two looks at the people who were chosen or volunteered from each community to act as the liaisons for that voice, to work on the committees that spearheaded the projects. An outline of the procedure and execution of a community-history book follows in chapter three, in order to show the involvement of a community in making its voice heard as loudly and clearly as possible. What a community said about itself, or in other words, the subject matter of a community-history book is examined in chapter four. This chapter is particularly revealing of the way a community chooses to express itself, and create itself using the written word. The last chapter is the key to understanding the essential fact of community history -- it is the beginning,

not the end, of a dialogue between the written word and its audience, a catalyst designed to promote both an oral and a written continuation of a community and its history. This thesis aims to convince that community history, as practiced in Saskatchewan, is a living history, dedicated to the continuation of Saskatchewan communities long after the physical remnants of an area have passed away.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **PRIDE, NOSTALGIA, AND A NEW FAD: THE MOTIVATION OF COMMUNITY HISTORY**

What motives prompt a community to write a history of its pioneers? Undoubtedly, it is done as a loving tribute to those who opened up our country, triumphant over great hardships, disappointments, and loneliness; and have left us a glorious heritage....They were men and women of vision and determination which enabled them to see beyond immediate difficulties to the great land that was to be. We have been deeply moved by some of the stories that are told.<sup>1</sup>

Our primary purpose in gathering, soliciting, writing, and editing materials for this book has been to celebrate who we are and where we have come from. We seek to celebrate the common experiences that make this a good community in which to live -- or a good community to claim as part of our heritage wherever we live.<sup>2</sup>

Community-history writing in Saskatchewan was both a celebration and a reflection of a community. Through the creation and publication of a community-history

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<sup>1</sup> "Foreward." Landis Historical Society, The Landis Record: Landis and District Memories. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1980). p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Farquharson, "History -- An Introduction." Saltcoats and District Historical Society, Saltcoats Roots and Branches. (Regina: WA Print Works, 1982). p. iv.

book, Saskatchewan people were able to tell their own story, in their own words. Saskatchewan non-Native people were able, for the most part, to pinpoint their exact beginnings, right down to the first pioneer and first homestead claim, and to trace a community's memory through to the present day.<sup>3</sup> Since surveyors opened Saskatchewan for pioneer settlement only in the late nineteenth century,<sup>4</sup> most communities in this province are less than one hundred years old. As a result, Saskatchewan communities were and are able to produce historical profiles that cover their entire time span -- which is an impressive feat. However, the knowledge that something can be done does not necessarily mean that something will be done. Communities needed to be inspired to collect their history, to be convinced that their story was worth telling. This chapter will explore those inspirations and convincing arguments that pushed communities to publish community-history books. Many geographical areas of Saskatchewan supported the production of community histories. They were responding to: a perceived gap in the scholarly records; the atmosphere of nostalgia and memory provoked by community, provincial, and federal anniversaries; a fear of losing the stories of dying pioneers; the influence of organized clubs that produced community histories as a part of their mandate; or simply a deeply-held sense of community pride. The books served as an ideal instrument for communities to find,

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<sup>3</sup> There has been interest in writing community history in the western Plains of the United States as well as in Australia -- areas with settlement histories similar to western Canada. These types of histories, centered on the myth of the pioneers, rarely include Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal historical writing on pre-contact Aboriginal society is not a part of typical Saskatchewan community-history production. This issue will be explored in greater detail in chapter four.

<sup>4</sup> J.H. Archer, Saskatchewan: A History. (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980). p. 56.

define, and put forth their own voice.

What were the arguments and justifications that prompted communities to compile their histories? The reasons given in the two introductory quotes -- to produce a tribute to the pioneers, and to celebrate a sense of identity as a community -- tell a good portion of that story. Community histories were written as celebrations of the people of a community, of the pioneers who came first, and the people they and their children have become. The books preserved the thoughts and experiences of those who worked so hard to build the communities. They recounted the hardships and triumphs of the pioneer and settlement process, both for the entertainment and reflection of the present, but also for the instruction and education of the future generations. By far the majority of the over 200 histories used for this thesis mentioned some variation of this theme.<sup>5</sup> The history-book committee of Raymore put it thus in 1980:

It is our hope you will spend many enjoyable hours reading this book learning about our district and the origins of many of its families. We hope you will pass it on to following generations. Although we are only part of a young province we have already developed a proud heritage.<sup>6</sup>

In 1987, those involved in writing the history of the town of Herbert said it this way:

We have written for those who have memories that go back a long way, whether they remained here through the difficult years or sought greener pastures elsewhere. We have written

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<sup>5</sup> As most of these books were written to preserve the pioneer era, few have been produced from communities in northern Saskatchewan. Many of these histories carried written dedications, most often to the pioneers, but also to the future generations of the community.

<sup>6</sup> "Introduction." Raymore and District Historical Society, From Prairie Wool to Golden Grain. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1980). p. ix.

for those who came later, and also for our younger readers who perhaps wonder what the town was like decades before their birth. We have tried to interest and inform the generations of descendants, who were born far away from their original roots, may never have visited here, and yet think of it as home. Perhaps a little arrogantly, we have written for generations yet unborn.<sup>7</sup>

Saskatchewan people from every community saw, and responded to, a deep-seated need to record and preserve the early history of this province.

This overwhelming phenomenon, however, cannot be explained simply as a need. After all, there have been academic historians who have written and published extensively about the pioneer experience in western Canada.<sup>8</sup> If the subject was already in the capable hands of the academics, why did so many Saskatchewan communities take it upon themselves to produce their own histories? The action strongly suggests that there was a gap in the historical record that needed to be filled, that the books and articles written by university scholars had missed a vital part of the story. What some academics had done perhaps was write, for the most part, about the whole "pioneer experience," thereby creating a homogenous history for the entire prairie West. The homesteading experience in southern Saskatchewan often seemed virtually

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<sup>7</sup> "Introduction," Bittersweet Years: the Herbert Story. (Canada: Jostens, Canada, 1987). p. ii.

<sup>8</sup> For works on homesteading and the pioneer experience in the West see: R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, eds., The Prairie West: Historical Readings. (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992); Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Susan Jackel, ed., A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Gentlewomen in the Canadian West. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982); David Jones and Ian Macpherson, eds., Building Beyond the Homestead. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988); David Jones, Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987); and Linda Rasmussen et al., A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women. (Toronto: Women's Press, 1974).

indistinguishable to what was happening in northern Alberta.<sup>9</sup> This sort of homogeneity, of whitewashing, could not sit well in communities such as Bulyea and Strasbourg, Saskatchewan, whose rivalry is nearly legendary in the area.<sup>10</sup> To suggest that Saskatchewan communities such as these two (and most others as well) share an identical history is to raise an unholy ire. Intertwined, perhaps, but certainly not identical. These strong feelings of pride and uniqueness contributed to the creation of individual community-history books.

From where did those feelings of pride and uniqueness come? Were the scholarly historians wrong? Were there not some universal pioneer experiences that all the communities faced? Certainly there were:

The simple dwelling...sanctified its builder; the simple diet, based on flour, potatoes, and oatmeal supplemented by such store-bought luxuries, where possible, as coffee, tea, and sugar, purified those who received it; the first furrows in virgin soil, cut with the new chilled-steel plough and the recently purchased team..., represented a holy act and a contribution to the extension of God's empire; the endless bone-shattering hours on the trail were a testing as severe as the natural calamities of hail, blizzard, frost and drought; and the social gatherings, whether dances, church services, or picnics, were somehow happier and more unified in spirit than any of those that followed.<sup>11</sup>

But these images, the epitome of the myth of the prairie pioneer, leave out one very important factor: the people. The foremost characteristic that distinguishes

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, chapter 13, "The rural west 1900-30: The farm, the village, and King Wheat" in Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, pp. 301-338.

<sup>10</sup> MMPC, Interview with Helen Thompson of Bulyea, October 25, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, p. 305.

communities and contributes most directly to feelings of pride is that each district is made up of a unique gathering of individual people. As Walter Farquharson, one of the editors of the Saltcoats history put it, community-history books were written "to celebrate who we are...."<sup>12</sup> Most scholarly historians, for reasons of time, space, and inclination, rarely write the histories of individuals or individual communities unless those individuals or communities have distinguished themselves beyond their sphere.<sup>13</sup> To many professional historians, writing the history of Pauline and Emil Kirychuk of Paddockwood would not be a viable proposition -- in short, it would not usually get them tenure or advance their reputation. But to the people of Paddockwood who knew Pauline and Emil and their music-loving family, and danced with them at the neighbourhood barn dances, their history is of interest and importance to an understanding and appreciation of their community. What the academic historians cannot give to Saskatchewan communities is this sense of pride and uniqueness, and evidence of individual contribution, worth, and self-esteem. Community-history books were produced to fill that very important gap.

How do community-history books do it? How can they satisfy demands of community pride in ways that academics can or do not? The answer lies in several

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<sup>12</sup> Farquharson, Saltcoats Roots and Branches, p. iv.

<sup>13</sup> This trend has been slowly changing with the rise of "case studies" in history and sociology. It is now acceptable for an academic to focus on a particular community, area, town, or region in order to answer particular questions on community construction, politics, agriculture, or a host of other concerns. However, the focus is primarily on the questions, the theories and the abstract ideas; the community is analyzed only in relation to how it fits the theories. Since the focus of these studies lies outside the community, I do not classify them as community histories. For a further discussion of this issue, see the introduction to this thesis. (p. 4-5). Some good examples of case studies in Canadian history are: Paul Voisey, Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); and Michael Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).



directions. First, as stated, these books tell a particular story -- that of the people and the community. Secondly, it is important to note who is telling the story: the people themselves. Most of the local, rural, community, and town histories written in Saskatchewan between 1955 and 1995 were compiled by small groups of ordinary, non-academic people with ambition and an interest in discovering and preserving the history of their community. It is imperative to note that the word used is "compiled" rather than "written" -- that is a deliberate choice. Although a few of the histories were written in narrative form by one or two authors,<sup>14</sup> the overwhelming majority were put together by a committee who solicited material from people in the community, or gathered it in the archives or the land-titles offices. In this way, Saskatchewan communities expressed their legendary sense of co-operation. These were community projects, and their committee members generally reflected this co-operative spirit. Thirdly, community history books satisfy community pride because they were written specifically for the people of a community.

Perhaps the most important way that community-history books were able to capture and define a community's pride and originality is in the way they served as a platform for personal expression and self-esteem. The committees attempted to solicit personal life stories from each and every family who ever lived in their community.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Community-history books produced in the early years, from 1955 to the mid 1970s, were sometimes compiled by only one or two people. Once the larger publishing companies became involved, community-history books were almost exclusively committee-driven. The average committee contained between ten and twenty people.

<sup>15</sup> The committees were not always successful in their attempts to gather histories from all community members. For various reasons, some stories were missed. A discussion of this problem is found in chapter four.

The result was a forum where everyone's history was important, whether a person became a politician and had fame and fortune far away from home, or was a schoolteacher who married a local farmer, raised a family and led a quiet life. There was a sense of equality, an acknowledgement that "we all affect someone in one way or another."<sup>16</sup> For this reason, questions of class and class conflict are difficult -- if not impossible -- to examine using a community-history book. In short, these history books are "runaway best seller[s]" in their communities, in the words of Canadian author Robert Collins, because they contain "the name of virtually every person who ever inhabited the [communities]."<sup>17</sup>

To achieve this goal, to publish the life story of every person and family in their chosen area, each committee worked against a deadly enemy: time. The clock was ticking, and each week an added obituary in the local newspaper meant another pioneer's story that was lost. Again and again, the prefaces and introductions of the community histories acknowledged the sinister hand that made their task more and more difficult. Pam Clarke, a community-history worker from Dinsmore, said, "The only thing I regret is that we didn't do ours 10 years earlier when some of the old pioneers were still alive."<sup>18</sup> Mayvis Goranson, the editor of the East Weyburn project, echoed that thought: "It is very apparent that had this project been undertaken twenty or forty

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<sup>16</sup> "Foreward." Naicam Heritage Committee, Gleanings Along the Way: A History of Naicam, LacVert, and Surrounding Districts. (Inter-Collegiate Press, 1980). p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Collins, "Shamrock's Runaway Best Seller." Reader's Digest (September 1991). p. 127.

<sup>18</sup> Cited by Myrna MacDonald, The Western Producer, May 4, 1995. p. 76.

years sooner, there would have been much more first hand information. We feel fortunate to have saved what we have."<sup>19</sup> So many carried this sense of regret, but often tempered with an echo of "better late than never." The committees knew that, despite their best efforts and intentions, certain stories would always be missing.

All of these things – an urgency brought on by lost stories, and a determination to save as many as possible, a sense of personal and community pride, a tacit acknowledgement that most academic historians would never write the kind of history ordinary people wished to read about their community, a desire to honour the pioneers of this province and preserve their own history in their own words, and a need to celebrate individual and collective experiences -- contributed to the prairie wildfire of community-history publishing that has swept Saskatchewan since the 1950s. But it would be inaccurate to say all the impetus came from within. Local- and community-history collection and preservation were encouraged by outside forces as well; Homemakers' clubs, provincial and federal governments, and publishing companies all influenced and guided the communities into action.

In 1980, as part of the marketing surrounding the "Celebrate Saskatchewan" festivities, Ved Arora of the provincial library published the Saskatchewan Bibliography.<sup>20</sup> In it, he lists over 1200 local histories that had been published by and about towns, villages, and school districts from all across the province. The Prairie

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<sup>19</sup> "Preface." Weyburn RM#67 History Book Committee, As Far As the Eye Can See. (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1986). p. ix.

<sup>20</sup> Ved Arora, Saskatchewan Bibliography. (Regina: Saskatchewan Provincial Library, 1980).

History Room of the Regina public library, which gathers local and community histories from across the prairies, boasts about 1700 books in its collection.<sup>21</sup> These numbers give a clear indication of how widespread and popular community-history books are in Saskatchewan. On closer examination, these two bibliographies reveal some interesting publishing patterns -- most local histories were produced in waves, coinciding roughly with various provincial and federal anniversaries.

Saskatchewan celebrated its golden jubilee in 1955. Canada at the time was picking itself up after the war, working to create a national identity, a national culture, as seen in the cross-Canada hearings of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences of 1949 and 1950 (known as the Massey Commission).<sup>22</sup> The Saskatchewan organizers, not wishing to act unpatriotically, encouraged a kind of celebration that emphasized Saskatchewan's unique culture as a part of Canada, not one in competition with it.<sup>23</sup> As political scientist David E. Smith explains:

The Massey Commission hearings revealed a desire for greater national awareness, but for those westerners who articulated this sentiment, national awareness invariably meant a greater knowledge of self. Thus, when the Saskatchewan Archives Board "originated" the idea of the Golden Jubilee, the celebration was explained as an opportunity "to encourage and develop Saskatchewan culture, to enhance the standing of the province in the eyes of the provincial residents

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<sup>21</sup> Saskatchewan Local History Directory. Prairie History Room, Regina Public Library, 1995.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Litt, The Muses, The Masses, and the Massey Commission. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> David E. Smith, "Celebrations and History on the Prairies." Journal of Canadian Studies vol. 17, no. 3, Fall 1982. p. 51.

themselves," as well as others.<sup>24</sup>

With a budget of only a half a million dollars, the Archives Board and its legislated Golden Jubilee Committee were not in a position to give grants for research and publication of local histories.<sup>25</sup> Instead, they used the money to foster a sense of history, through the creation of historic sites, tourist promotions, homecomings, community affairs, publicity, exhibits, and creative activities.<sup>26</sup>

As well, in 1954, the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, collaborated on a new high-school History curriculum for the 1955 school year.<sup>27</sup> In it, the Department and the Federation set out a blueprint for Saskatchewan high schools to research a school- or community-history book for that year's project. Many schools across Saskatchewan took up the challenge. Several people who were interviewed for this study mentioned that they were a part of these projects as high-school students. Five of the seventeen (29%) histories from the 1950s used in this study were originally compiled by high-school students and teachers. The histories varied in length and in scope, but still answered the growing call from within the communities and the province to gather and preserve their own history.

The aura surrounding the 1955 celebration led many communities and

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<sup>24</sup> Smith, "Celebrations," p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> The Jubilee committee in Alberta, however, was able to give money for such projects, although not as many towns took up the challenge until the professional printers entered the market in the late 1960s. See Smith, "Celebrations," p. 50-53 and MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliever of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, "Celebrations," p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> See "Introduction." Colonsay School, Colonsay Memoirs 1905-1955. 1955. Also see: MMPC, phone interview with the librarian at the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Library by Merle Massie, June, 1996.

community groups to publish a history on their own. Committees that had been set up to oversee the homecoming and other town celebrations extended their mandate to produce a history of their area.<sup>28</sup> Alameda, Assiniboia, and Viscount, Saskatchewan, are all examples of Jubilee Committees that published their community's story.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes farmers' clubs or Ladies' Aid groups launched these projects, but one club in particular, an organization with a long history in Saskatchewan, responded with amazing alacrity to the Jubilee history frenzy -- the Homemakers' Club.

In 1939, Lady Tweedsmuir, wife of the then Governor General and an honorary member of the Homemakers' Club (Women's Institutes), published a challenge and a call to all Homemakers' Clubs across Canada. In her address, which was copied in many of the "Tweedsmuir histories," she said:

It is a most useful and satisfying task for Women's Institute members to see that nothing valuable is lost or forgotten, and women should be on the alert always to guard the traditions of their homes, and to see that water color sketches and prints, poems and prose legends should find their way into these books....After all, it is the history of humanity which is continually interesting to us....<sup>30</sup>

The Canadian Homemakers'-Women's Institutes were encouraged by the "Tweedsmuir

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<sup>28</sup> Five of seventeen of those published in the 1950s and used in this study were compiled by Golden Jubilee Committees.

<sup>29</sup> Alameda Jubilee Committee, A History of Alameda and District. (No Printer, hereafter cited as N.P., 1955); Assiniboia Golden Jubilee Committee, Golden Memories. (N.P., 1955); and Viscount, Sk. Golden Jubilee Committee/ J. Earl Storey, The Viscount Story. (N.P., 1955).

<sup>30</sup> "Foreward." Bounty Homemakers' Club, Bounty.... (N.P., 1956). Also in "Lady Tweedsmuir's Message." Conquest Homemakers' Club, This Conquest of Ours, 1904-1948. (N.P., 1949).

Prize" to produce and submit the best local history to the national office for judging.<sup>31</sup>

The Saskatchewan Homemakers' groups responded with lukewarm enthusiasm during and immediately following the war years, but sprang into action with the coming of the Golden Jubilee. Homemakers' Clubs of Saskatchewan produced nearly one-third of the histories in the 1950s. That trend continued, though muted, into the 1960s and 1970s, with about 15% and 23% of the total for each decade studied in this thesis. To put this in perspective, no other organized club in Saskatchewan showed this kind of widespread interest and dedication to community history. In the last forty years, the Homemakers' Clubs were second only to specifically created community-history committees as the main publishers and practitioners of community history in Saskatchewan. As written in Legacy: A History of Saskatchewan Homemakers' Clubs and Women's Institutes:

Many clubs have written comprehensive community histories under the spur of this competition [the Tweedsmuir Prize], and the enthusiasm for this kind of project has expanded far beyond the confines of the original competition. The writing of local history has become a provincial preoccupation in Saskatchewan, with each provincial anniversary producing a new crop.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, the Homemakers' Clubs of Saskatchewan were instrumental in setting the pace and starting the "fad" of community history.

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<sup>31</sup> The "Tweedsmuir Prize was a cup, which the winning club kept for one year. There are microfilms of many of the Ontario Women's Institute efforts held in the Ontario Archives. The University of Saskatchewan Archives has a good collection of those produced in Saskatchewan, as the Homemakers' Clubs were affiliated in part with the University. See Donald Simpson, "Ivy-Mantled Tower and Settler's Cabin: Some Thoughts on Local History in Britain and Canada" in British Journal of Canadian Studies vol 1, no. 1, 1986. p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Legacy: A History of Saskatchewan Homemakers' Clubs and Women's Institutes 1911-1988. (Canada: Focus Publishing, 1988). p. 39.

The kind of book produced during the 1955 wave holds little resemblance to the sophisticated, hard cover, professionally published tomes of today. Many were typed, reproduced on Gestetner copiers, and bound either notebook-style, or sent to a bindery, much like a university thesis. A few, such as Bounty..., produced by the Bounty Homemakers' Club, were even handwritten and mimeographed. Since the picture reproduction at the time was of such poor quality, few of these books bothered to include many photographs. In addition, as noted, the Jubilee Committee did not have the resources to grant funds for these projects. Instead, the groups found what funding they needed from within their community, either from business and personal donations, selling advertising space in the books, or participating in the usual round of raffles, catering, and other traditional community fund raisers. As a result, the projects were much smaller in nature and scope than those produced in later decades.

Once the excitement surrounding the Jubilee Year abated, community-history production waned. However, the role models were there, and the challenge was out. Communities began to look inward for a reason to produce these histories -- often, the fiftieth anniversary of the town served as the springboard. Kindersley produced The Town of Kindersley: 50 Years of Progress 1910-1960 in 1960, while Codette published The Golden Jubilee of the Nipawin Rural Municipality no. 487, 1913-1963 in 1964.<sup>33</sup>

In 1967, as Canada's centennial dawned, Saskatchewan communities responded once again to the mood of celebration and history production. As in 1955, there were

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<sup>33</sup> The Town of Kindersley: 50 Years of Progress 1910-1960. (No Publisher, hereafter cited as N. Pub. Kindersley: The Print Shop, 1960); The Golden Jubilee of the Nipawin Rural Municipality no. 487, 1913-1963. (N. Pub., N. P., 1964).



few specific government grants to fund research and production costs, so once again, the money had to come from within the communities. In some cases, the books sold advertising space to local businesses,<sup>34</sup> but most often, donations were solicited from the Rural Municipality or Local Improvement Districts, local banks, businesses, and individuals. As the books themselves were modest in size and scope, they were not expensive to publish. Moreover, these books were rarely meant for mass production, which would also have boosted the cost.<sup>35</sup> However, those produced during the wave of 1967 were more sophisticated than their counterparts of 1955. Of the twenty histories used in this study for that decade, nine (45%) were printed and published by professional businesses, as opposed to three of the seventeen (17%) for the decade before.

Once again, there was somewhat of a falling off in community-history production after the anniversary of 1967. However, it was not as noticeable as in 1955, since only five years, instead of twelve, would elapse before the province once again immersed itself in celebration. Homecoming '71 was "a hop out of kin" for the province, since the year marked no particular special anniversary for either province or country. Instead, it was promoted as a way to lure back some of those who had left the province with the massive rural depopulation of the 1950s and 1960s. The celebration actively promoted

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<sup>34</sup> The towns of Viscount, Val Marie, Codette, Kindersley, and Dewar Lake sold advertising space in their community histories to raise funds for the projects.

<sup>35</sup> Because some of the communities did not mass-produce their histories, those who compile lists of local- and community-history books recognize that their lists are generally incomplete. The majority of the earliest community histories would only produce a few copies of their product, making them rare and hard to find. For example, there is a persistent rumor that someone in my hometown of Paddockwood produced a history for the Jubilee, but I have been unsuccessful in locating a copy.

ideas of community, of belonging, of nostalgia -- all of which are necessary for community history. More and more people were aware of those histories produced in many communities for the first two celebrations, and the idea was spreading rapidly. As argued above, it became a matter of community pride as to whether a community had its own history book. There was a growing sense that "If such and such a community has one, why don't we? We're just as good, or better than they are!"

After Homecoming 71, community-history production in this province grew steadily, instead of fading off, as happened in the first two waves. The histories produced in the early-to-mid 1970s resembled their counterparts from the last two decades in style and scope. However, 1975 and 1976 marked the entry, according to the books used in this survey, of both Friesen Printers of Altona, Manitoba and Turner-Warwick of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, two printing businesses that would soon come to dominate the market during the 1980s.<sup>36</sup> As their influence grew, so would their impact on the style, range, and cost of publishing a community history book.

The year 1976 also saw the first instance, in this study, of specific governmental funding. The Spiritwood-Leoville history, Pioneers and Followers of Idylwild and Witchehan Districts, published by the Idylwild Women's Institute, received funding from the New Horizons Project, Federal Department of Health and Welfare. The Minister of Industry, Trade, and Commerce published a pamphlet on the New Horizons program in 1978 that explained:

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<sup>36</sup> Harrisland Sewing Club History Committee, Homesteaders South of the Whitemud. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1975) and Idylwild Women's Institute, Pioneers and Followers of Idylwild and Witchehan Districts. (North Battleford: Turner-Warwick, 1976).

The New Horizons Program was launched by the Department of National Health and Welfare, in 1972, to enable retired Canadians to participate in projects of their own choice and design for the benefit of themselves and their community. ...Major types of activities funded to date include: recreation and sports; crafts and hobbies; historical, cultural and educational activities; social and information services and drop-in centres.<sup>37</sup>

Begun in 1972, this program was the mainstay of community-history production in this province. Grants, averaging \$2000 or more, helped boost the finances, and thereby the scope, length, and printing capabilities of community-history projects. As more and more areas became aware of this financial resource, the mass production of commercially-printed history books became more and more feasible.

As the province geared up for its 75th birthday celebrations, Saskatchewan people launched themselves into one of the most spectacular eras of community-history creation imaginable. Since 1978, there have been close to one thousand community-history books published in this province.<sup>38</sup> Not only was the federal government involved through its New Horizons grants, but the provincial government, for the first time, created a solid financial base for the celebrations. There was "a scheme of community incentive grants, a discretionary fund for special projects and a per capita grant (fifty cents a head) [which] gave local communities the money to undertake a variety of projects, hundreds of which took the form of published local histories."<sup>39</sup> As

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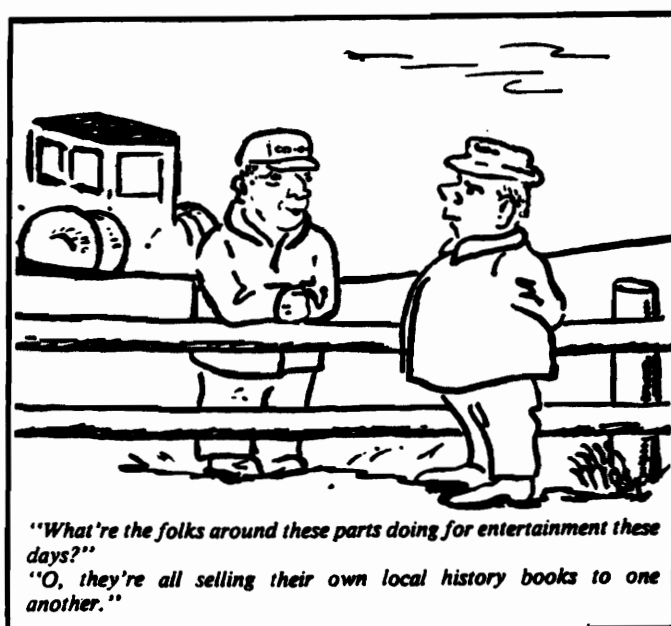
<sup>37</sup> Government of Canada, Social Security: National Programs 1978 The Minister of Industry, Trade, and Commerce, Statistics Canada - Institutional and Public Finance, Statistics Branch, Social Security Unit, Ottawa. (Pamphlet).

<sup>38</sup> To put this in perspective, that is an average of 4.3 books per month for the last nineteen years.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, "Celebrations," p. 54.

money became more readily available, the competition between communities to produce the best, most interesting history book heated up. As Vivian LeBar of Birsay told me, she became involved in the Coteau area book "when the history book fad was popular in Saskatchewan."<sup>40</sup> (See Figure 1.1, p. 39).

Figure 1.1. Cartoon Illustration of Popularity of Community Histories.



Source: Christine Pike, Ever in My Mind (Regina: Inter Collegiate Press, 1984. p. 6.

This time around, "the diamond jubilee identified the province as a distinct society. In the 1950s the emphasis was on overcoming isolation[;] in the 1980s it was on maintaining or developing separateness."<sup>41</sup> Saskatchewan people from all walks of life and all areas of the province used their sense of community and provincial pride to

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<sup>40</sup> MMPC, Letter, Vivian LeBar of Birsay to Merle Massie (nee McGowan), no date, Spring 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, "Celebrations," p. 55.

create lasting written monuments dedicated to the distinctiveness of their home communities.

This chapter has outlined the idea behind the creation of a community history. Communities recognized a gap in the historical record that, with few exceptions, academic historians and their works did not, and could not fill. No one could tell the stories of the pioneers and of the triumphs and tragedies of creating this province better than the people themselves. The people were responding to external stimuli, including the atmosphere of nostalgia promoted by various provincial and federal anniversaries, government grants and encouragement to record each area's history, and the push from official clubs and organizations, in particular the Homemakers', whose work created a role model for others to follow. There were internal stimuli as well, specifically the consciousness that the original pioneers were passing away, and their stories were being lost, but also, and perhaps most importantly, the communities were responding to the growing mania for history collection with a sense of pride. The community-based nature of these books easily stirred traditional small-town rivalries and bolstered feelings of distinctiveness. The communities rejected the traditional images of homeogeneity found in academic works, and instead approved the process of creating a community-history book that would tell their own story in their own words. Saskatchewan communities, as this chapter shows, wanted to have their own voice. What they needed, as chapter two will explain, were people within the community who were willing to act as conduits for that voice.

## **CHAPTER TWO COMMUNITY-HISTORY COMMITTEES: THEIR MEMBERS, SUCCESES AND SHORTCOMINGS**

Back about two or three years ago  
some neighbors got together and what do you know.  
We considered and decided by Hook or by Crook,  
we'd try to start making a History Book!!  
Calling a meeting to organize,  
a committee that had to realize,  
if something wasn't done immediately  
to keep our heritage for our family,  
another generation would soon be gone,  
then who would sing our farewell song?<sup>1</sup>

Many Saskatchewan communities, as outlined in chapter one, recognized an urgently growing need to gather and record their history. Sometimes that need was articulated around a kitchen table during afternoon coffee, as the poem above suggests. At other times, a community or school reunion, often in conjunction with various provincial and federal anniversaries, served as the initial springboard. Jean Scott of Biggar explained:

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<sup>1</sup> Ruby White, "Writing a History Book." Armley History Book Committee, Homestead to Heritage: History of Armley and Districts of Manlius, Armley, Silver Stream, Waterfield. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1987).

It started out with reunions....We decided that we'd have a reunion, and we got it going, and, we had about, there was about 400 came back....So when we found that so many of the older people came back, and they were so interesting, and they were so interested in seeing people and that, well that's when we thought we should have a history and get some of these stories into print, you know, so they can carry on.<sup>2</sup>

In this case, the reunion, the stories, and the camaraderie prompted the initial idea of the history book, once everyone went home. Sometimes, though, as in the case of Richard, Saskatchewan, the knowledge that a reunion or homecoming was in the planning stages sparked the idea for the history book. As Hattie Wawryk said:

Celebrate Saskatchewan 1980 seemed to be a good year when a lot of communities, I suppose with input from the government, decided to do history books. And so we felt it was time to get some of this early history recorded, because it becomes less factual and more memory as time goes on. So we undertook the project of doing the history book....We were somewhat pressed for time for our history book because we didn't start until the summer of 1979 and we had our material into the publisher by December of '79 because we wanted to have our histories out for 1980 so that visitors home would be able to get copies of them.<sup>3</sup>

Other areas were prompted to do a history book because they were aware of books previously published in other communities.<sup>4</sup> Some history books were put together by clubs such as the Homemakers'-Women's Institutes, which already had a mandate to collect and preserve community history. Regardless of the initial stimulation, there was

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<sup>2</sup> MMPC, Interview with Jean Scott of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> MMPC, Interview with Hattie Wawryk of Richard, July 11, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995. See also Floral History Book Committee, "Introduction," Our Heritage: era of south and east of Saskatoon. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1985). p. iv.

tremendous community response. Whether it then became a matter of community pride, or just a recognition that the idea was a good one, hundreds of communities across this province were swept up in the concept of doing a community-history book. Some books were done in 1955, more again in 1967 and 1971, but the majority were published in the firestorm surrounding Celebrate Saskatchewan 1980 and its aftermath.<sup>5</sup>

As any editor or writer will testify, it is very difficult to organize and write a book. It is even more difficult, by extension, to co-ordinate a book with more than one author. In their effort to let every person and family in an area tell their own story, community-history books were a potential minefield of confusion and chaos. Each community, therefore, recognized the need to have a core group of people ready and able to act as virtual mouthpieces, gathering, sorting, and organizing a community's various memories into one coherent voice. The three quotations cited at the beginning of the chapter refer to "we," or, the committee that spearheaded the community-history projects. This chapter will take a close look at the people on those committees, to get an idea of what kinds of people were willing, or expected, to act as liasons between a community and its published story. The chapter will examine the methods used to choose committee workers, and the criteria those people had to meet. Issues of interest, education, availability, gender, community expectations, age, ethnicity, language, and objectivity will all be explored to suggest that every Saskatchewan community had a pool of community-history talent in their own backyard. Moreover, it will be argued that women

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<sup>5</sup> Since most of the people interviewed for this project were involved in community-history book production between 1978 and 1988, this chapter will focus primarily on that time frame.



best fit the above criteria, and formed the majority on most community-history committees. However, even though the process of choosing committee members was reasonably democratic, and usually secured a healthy cross-section of the community's gender, class, and ethnic groups, a few committees found themselves at odds with their respective communities at some point in their mandate.

People became a part of a community-history committee in a variety of ways. In some cases, they were part of the original group of "neighbours" that first became excited about the idea of creating a community-history book. In their drive to convert others, often they would automatically become the leaders. In other cases, the idea would come from an already established community group, such as a celebration committee for an anniversary, or a local club or church. In these instances, the existing club or committee officers would take on particular community-history committee jobs. For instance, the Maymont Library Board extended its existing role as curator of the library to cover a new role as the curator and collector of its community story, and published From Sod to Solar in 1980.<sup>6</sup> Every member took on specific tasks for the history book, over and above their library-board roles. Friendship, of course, was also a deciding factor on many committees. An original member may invite, or cajole, some friends into helping with the various tasks. In this way, communities that had an established group of neighbours or friends that were inclined to lead community projects often stepped forward to help with a community-history book.

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<sup>6</sup> Maymont Library Board, From Sod to Solar. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1980).

While all of these methods were pursued in communities across Saskatchewan, perhaps the most prominent method of selecting committee members was by appointment. In true Saskatchewan co-operative fashion, communities called meetings to gauge response. Held in a community hall, often with fifty or more interested people in attendance (depending on the size of the community), these meetings established the basic structures and members of the committees.<sup>7</sup> Nominated people filled the essential roles: a chairperson or president, to preside at meetings; a secretary, to record the minutes; a treasurer, to control the purse-strings; and an editor, to oversee the project itself. As well, a larger body of individuals volunteered or were appointed to head smaller committees to look after such issues as pictures, proofreading, typing, mailing, and fundraising.<sup>8</sup>

Who were the people who volunteered, or were appointed, to act as conductors for a community's voice? What kind of persons devoted their talents and energies to such a demanding project? -- first and foremost, of course, people who were willing. If a person was willing to devote long hours to a demanding project, no community would deny that desire. Even if a person was not particularly well liked, or in some way vaguely undesirable or ill suited to the task, a position was still found for their energies. The primary criterion for an acceptable committee member was a willingness to work.

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<sup>7</sup> These meetings occurred in Floral, LeRoy, Alsask, Semans, Biggar, and many other areas.

<sup>8</sup> The various aspects of a community-history project will be examined in chapter three.

Second, a person had to be interested in the task at hand. Generally, this was easy, as people who were not interested in the project rarely attended any of the private or public organizational meetings. Usually, attendance meant a degree of interest that could be beneficial to any committee. If a person was interested in the project, his or her inspiration and enthusiasm were welcomed. When a few of these willing and interested people came together, and gave ten-percent inspiration and ninety-percent hard work, the quintessential community-history book committee emerged.

The subtle question to ask at this point is: in what were they interested? Were all of those interviewed, men and women, interested in history? Or were they more concerned with preserving a sense of community, and the stories of people they knew and cared about? Those interviewed had much to say on these matters. Only about one third of those people interviewed (10 of 28) expressed an interest in "general" history. Adrian Paton of Arcola had immersed himself in native history for south-east Saskatchewan, and had established a solid reputation. Delwyn Jansen of LeRoy had a passion for postal history that resonated throughout his interview, and both Michael Bartolf of Oxbow and Doreen Schmidt of Maymont expressed their lifelong interest in the subject. However, the majority said bluntly that they had little use for traditional kinds of history and history books. Ann Riehl of Allan told me, "well, I coulda cared less [about history] in high school -- that was the least of my interests."<sup>9</sup> Helen Thompson of Bulyea echoed that thought:

[Merle Massie]: But you liked history?

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<sup>9</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ann Riehl of Allan, August 4, 1995.

[Helen Thompson]: Ah...not old history.

[Merle Massie]: What's old history?

[Helen Thompson]: Well, like 200, 300 years ago, like kings and princes and stuff. Wars. Yeah.<sup>10</sup>

Others would reply, as Isla Solanik of Biggar did: "I found history fascinating, but it wasn't a passion of mine. It wasn't anything that I really pursued, as far as world history goes. But, the more I got into local histories, the more excited I [became] about it."<sup>11</sup>

Charlotte Gillat of Maymont reiterated this thought, when she explained: "I don't know if I have that much interest in history. I'm very interested in people that I know, the history behind them, but history per se, I wouldn't say I was all that keen on it, [that I had] any interest in that."<sup>12</sup> As these excerpts show the majority of those interviewed were not history buffs in a traditional sense, but instead developed a keen interest in their own surroundings and the people they knew. It was their sense of community, of a desire to preserve and protect the stories of those around them that drew them into the committees.

Of course, there were other criteria than an expressed interest in community history and a willingness to work hard. Those who volunteered to be on a community-history committee made a substantial time commitment. To emphasize this point, the Pleasantdale history book committee noted, "only those who have worked on a book know of the many, many hours of work that were spent behind the scenes, (so to

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<sup>10</sup> MMPC, Interview with Helen Thompson of Bulyea, October 25, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> MMPC, Interview with Charlotte Gillat of Maymont, July 11, 1995.

say)."<sup>13</sup> As Isla Solanik of Biggar told me, "really, it does consume your life."<sup>14</sup> Since the average time, start to finish, for a community to solicit, gather, and publish its history was between two and three years, a person had to make a vast commitment, and many sacrifices. Few people with full-time jobs volunteered for major positions on committees, for an extensive time commitment was imperative. Instead, retirees, farm wives, and homemakers, people who either had the free time or were able to rearrange their daily schedules to accommodate the workload filled the positions. A person's availability could override his or her interest in working on a project.

Another constraint for those who wanted to help on community-history committees was their level of education. The very nature of these history projects, which were a collection of family and community stories, demanded that most of their workers, especially those involved in editing, proofreading, and typing, (the "big three" of any community-history book) be able to read and write accurately and quickly. This meant that people who left their formal schooling at an early age were less apt to be comfortable working in these areas. Instead, those with a higher level of formal education, particularly secretaries, nurses, and most noticeably, schoolteachers, took on those positions.

In addition, and closely linked with the issue of education, a committee member had to have a good working knowledge of the language(s) in which the book was

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<sup>13</sup> "Last Word from the Committee." Pleasantdale and District History Book Committee, Memories of the Past: A history of Pleasantdale, Silver Park, Chagoness and Kinistino Indian Band #91. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1981). p. 819.

<sup>14</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

published. In so many Saskatchewan communities, the older generations were born in other countries, particularly central and eastern Europe. For these people, their limited knowledge of written English (or the local language -- there are several histories in French and German) could prohibit them from being an active committee member. As a result, a committee had the potential to be biased in favour of the history of those who spoke the dominant language, although the books strove to include stories from every ethnic origin represented in an area.

As a general rule, most of the people who volunteered to help on community-history projects needed to have experience working with other people on committees. Since people had to work for such a lengthy period of time in close intellectual and artistic quarters with so many other people, a certain disposition towards others was essential. None of the committees was willing to let internal feuds derail the projects, so people had to learn to get along. If a person had experience on other community committees, whether in church, the ball team or figure-skating organization or the Seniors club, then a person's particular aptitudes were likely public knowledge. Some people were known, for example, as organizers, some as money handlers or researchers or letter-writers. These volunteer experiences helped to oil the gears of the fledgling committees.

Another consideration in the makeup of a committee was age. One had to be young enough to undertake the incredible amount of work, but still old enough to have the knowledge and ability to track down and record the stories. This criterion presented a delicate balance. In general, those who volunteered to work on committees were

between the ages of fifty and seventy, although typists were generally much younger, and those who provided invaluable references and recollections to help the committee members track down elusive families, were considerably older.<sup>15</sup> Considering the exhausting work of sending letters, proofreading, editing, drawing charts and maps, phoning people, working on fundraising, and whatever else needed doing, those in the fifty-to-seventy range seemed best suited to the task. Some were retired by that age, or had established farms, or were at the age when their children were gone and they needed other projects to keep them occupied.

One of the more interesting limitations on a committee member concerned the idea of objectivity, a classic issue for those writing history. In every community in Saskatchewan, there are people who are sometimes known as "insiders" and "outsiders." An insider is someone who grew up in a community, and is versed in many of the oral legends and stories of an area. Such a person would know automatically what stories to include, and what to exclude, or suppress, in a community-history book. An insider would know the local scandals and other stories of a community's lifetime. An outsider is someone who married into, or otherwise moved to a community as an adult. Generally, outsiders are unaware of the unwritten rules, old family feuds, or other local ancient gossip. As a result, they have an aura of objectivity, as a person who cannot be involved in local scandals, and whose interest would not be personal.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> This estimate is based on the discussion with the community-history individuals interviewed for the project.

<sup>16</sup> For an interesting look at the issue of "insiders" and "outsiders," see W.O. Mitchell, Roses Are Difficult Here. Mitchell relates the fictional story of June Melquist, a sociologist who spends six months living in and studying the small town of Shelby, Alberta. Dr. Melquist encounters formidable odds as an "outsider"

unwritten goal of any community was to include both insiders and outsiders on a community-history committee. In this way, nearly every community member could be satisfied.

So, the ideal community-history committee member was someone who was willing to help, was interested in helping, and enthusiastic about the project, and was available for the long months of work required. It was also imperative to have an acceptable level of education or experience, and a good working knowledge of the language. Ideally, the member had previous experience on various committees and was acceptable by the community either as an "insider" or an "outsider." It would sound, from these criteria, that each community came up with a very motley band of workers. In reality, however, the committees were very similar all across the province. Why? Because in every community, one large group was able to fill every or nearly every criteria -- women.

In discussing this project with me, my father, Sarge McGowan of Paddockwood, claimed that, for our hometown history book, Cordwood and Courage, "if the women hadn't done it, it would never have been done."<sup>17</sup> A quick look at the committee for that book confirms his statement: of the eleven people involved in the executive committee, only three were men. Moreover, one of those men, when approached to do an interview about the project, refused, and argued that his only contribution was to chair

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in the town, and never penetrates the unwritten codes of conduct that define Shelby life. Roses Are Difficult Here. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> MMPC, Interview with Sargent McGowan of Paddockwood, summer 1995.



the meetings. He had little to do with the demanding work of research, editing, proofreading or typing: "You're grandma and some of the other women did all that, Merle. I wasn't really involved."<sup>18</sup> These statements underline the crucial role women played in our hometown project, and helped formulate one of the questions used in the oral interviews for this project. All of the respondents were asked to comment on my father's statement, and concurred that without the drive and determination of women, these projects, for the most part, would never have been completed.

An examination of committee membership and gender in the books used in this study corroborates the oral testimony. Nearly three-quarters of the committee members who spearhead community history books were women. (See Table 2.1, page 52).

Table 2.1. Gender of Community-History Committee Members, Saskatchewan, 1950s-1990s.

Decade	Number of books studied	Total Persons Involved	Number of Men	% of Men	Number of Women	% of Women
1950s	11	154	54	35.1%	100	64.9%
1960s	12	83	23	27.7%	60	72.3%
1970s	24	369	85	23.0%	284	77.0%
1980s	93	2106	617	29.3%	1489	70.7%
1990s	18	407	109	26.8%	298	73.2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>158*</b>	<b>3119</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>28.5%</b>	<b>2231</b>	<b>71.5%</b>

Source: See Table 1.1, p. 14. \*Note: 51 books did not provide number and gender breakdown of committee membership.

<sup>18</sup> MMPC, Conversation with George Spoonheim of Paddockwood, July 1996.

Why were women the backbone of community-history committees? Because as a group, women were well suited to the criteria of availability, education, and community experience. Moreover, the oral testimony suggested that women responded to community expectations on the role of women and community work. As historian Ann Leger Anderson argued in her essay, "Saskatchewan Women, 1880-1920: A Field Study:"

Many local histories have been written by women either as individuals or as members of an organization, a fact which tells us more about Saskatchewan women than their contents are likely to reveal. Like women elsewhere, they were -- and are -- often seen as the chroniclers of the local past, the bearers of the collective memory.<sup>19</sup>

One of the first suggestions given by the interviewees to explain women's dominance in community histories was education. Adrian Paton of Arcola, Vivian Le Bar of Birsay, Jean Scott and Isla Solanik of Biggar, Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake, and others indicated in some way that women were more literate and educated than men, and so more inclined to become involved in a project where spelling, grammar, punctuation and other technical skills were essential. Hattie Wawryk of Richard put it very colourfully when she said: "maybe where women are into that kind of work, where they maybe do more reading and so on, [that] kind of thing, like a lot of the farmers probably pick up the paper where they read about farm machinery or grain or soil conditions or something like that..."<sup>20</sup> Betty Elliot of Paddockwood echoed this thought,

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<sup>19</sup> Ann Leger Anderson, "Saskatchewan Women, 1880-1920: A Field for Study," in H. Palmer and D. Smith, eds., The New Prairie Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan. (Vancouver, 1980). p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> MMPC, Interview with Hattie Wawryk of Richard, July 11, 1995.

when speaking of her husband, Charlie. She claimed, laughingly, that the only book he had ever read, excluding the Western Producer and other farm newspapers, was the Paddockwood community history, Cordwood and Courage.<sup>21</sup> However, the respondents usually qualified statements about education and gender. Vivian Le Bar restricted her observations to her area only, as did Isla Solanik. Adrian Paton added that "at that age group, the older women were generally the professionals. That they were the teachers or the nurses. Quite often they were....They had the education."<sup>22</sup>

An examination of the federal census returns of 1961 suggests that Paton's comments were quite accurate. In 1961, the census took a reading of education levels for men and women across the country.<sup>23</sup> In that year, 50.8% of the female respondents in Saskatchewan had finished their secondary education, and 3.5% had some university, as compared to 39.7% and 2.9% respectively for the men.<sup>24</sup> Taking into account that Paton was referring to the "older women," that is, women educated during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, these statistics suggest that in that age group, women were more likely to be better educated than men.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> MMPC, Conversation with Betty Elliot of Paddockwood, spring 1996.

<sup>22</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> According to this source, gender distinctions were not made any other year. From Daniel Kubat and David Thornton, A Statistical Profile of Canadian Society. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974). p. 100.

<sup>24</sup> Kubat and Thornton, Statistical Profile, p. 100.

<sup>25</sup> All of the women who were interviewed were educated within this time period.

Jean Scott, who was the president of the North Biggar History Book project, felt that she and Isla Solanik, who was the editor, were specifically suited to the task because they both had teaching backgrounds. As she said:

she [Isla Solanik] was a teacher, and I was a retired teacher, and so, that's how it started....I felt that we were confident enough that we could...because we had the education....[I]t was just being a teacher [that] gave us the confidence to go ahead with it [the project], to spearhead it.<sup>26</sup>

Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake also made particular mention of the teaching background of those who worked on the Grosswerder project, entitled Prairie Legacy. Both she and the president, Clara Ollenberger, as well as the treasurer, Olga Kreiger, were ex-teachers.

This was a common response. A significant number of the women who worked on community histories had a teaching background.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps this is not surprising considering that there were hundreds of rural school districts across this province from the pioneer era to the post-World-War-Two period, and those schools were often staffed by female teachers.<sup>28</sup> With better transportation and declining rural populations,

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<sup>26</sup> MMPC, Interview with Jean Scott of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>27</sup> Although the statistics are sketchy, due in part to the absence of such information in so many of the family histories, an analysis of Cordwood and Courage (3 of 9 women were teachers), As Far As the Eye Can See (5 of 10), and North Biggar History (6 of 13) suggests that between 35 and 50 percent of the women on the general committees had teaching experience. See: Paddockwood and District History Book, 1982, Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982); Weyburn RM #67 History Book Committee, As Far As the Eye Can See. (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1986); and North Biggar History Book Committee, A Harvest of Memories: North Biggar History. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1986). Moreover, seven of the fifteen interviewees that submitted a short biography for the thesis were teachers.

<sup>28</sup> See percentage of women teachers, 1920 through 1970, in A Statistical Profile of Canadian Society, p. 85.

the small rural divisions began to amalgamate and centralize in the 1950s, and more men entered the teaching force. Between 1951 and 1975, women teachers declined from 69 percent of all Saskatchewan teachers to just over 53%.<sup>29</sup> As a result of this decline, there was an abundance of ex-schooteachers whose education and experience made them particularly well suited to community-history work.

Although the general argument throughout so many of the interviews was that teachers made ideal candidates for these projects, not everyone agreed. Michael Bartolf of Oxbow thought that, as two of the editors for his hometown history book were retired teachers, the book "has somewhat of a 'sterile' content, as their [the editors] object was to write a perfect book....I feel that our history book lost some of its individualistic flavour in the way it was done."<sup>30</sup> He felt that ex-teachers, in their drive for "perfect" language and sentence structure, changed the stories too much from their original.<sup>31</sup>

The second major argument for why women were so much more inclined than men to be a part of a community-history project was the perception that rural and small-town women have more time. Again and again, this reverberated through the interviews. Doreen Schmidt of Maymont, Hattie Wawryk of Richard, Bill Sully of Biggar, to name just a few, were quick to point out that community histories were usually done

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<sup>29</sup> Kubat and Thornton, Statistical Profile, p. 94.

<sup>30</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow dated August 26, 1995.

<sup>31</sup> As chapter four will explain, the issue of language and editing was a major concern for many committees.

in "a farming community where the men were more interested in their farm work than they were in going out to meetings and such like. Whereas the women had more time to spend on this type of thing."<sup>32</sup> Whether women actually had more time, or just had more flexible daily schedules, is another matter. After all, as Ann Riehl of Allan indicated, farming is not a nine-to-five job, and neither is the creation of a history book. But, with a little work and shuffling, the two could be put together. As she said:

There was times when this material came back to us and we had only a small space of time when this reading had to be done. And I would say to the committee, "you know we have seven days to do this -- get in here. I need you now." And Clara, the dear girl would get up at 4 o'clock to do her washing, now we're not talking automatic washer here, we're talking wringer washer on the farm, and did her laundry, and then came into town.<sup>33</sup>

It would be incorrect to say that all of the community-history book committee members were rural women with no off-farm jobs. Many members, both men and women, held down more traditional hours at a regular job and still found time, on evenings and weekends, to contribute to these book projects. However, those who had the most demanding committee jobs, such as editing and proofreading, generally had to have a full-time commitment to the project. Since the majority of community-history books came from rural and small-town communities, where farming was the major occupation, farmers' wives and retired teachers, those who had the time or were able

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<sup>32</sup> MMPC, Interview with Bill Sully of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ann Riehl of Allan, August 4, 1995.

to rearrange their schedules to accommodate the work, were dominant fixtures on most committee lists.

It is important to note the support mechanisms that women usually have in small-town and rural communities. Whether made up of an informal coffee group that meets once a week, such as can be seen on any given day in any given town, or a more formal club with membership, dues and a committee structure, such as the Women's Institute, Order of the Eastern Star, the Kinettes, the Royal Purple, or any of the church Ladies Aids, women in Saskatchewan have a long history of organization.<sup>34</sup> When a project comes up, women are able to draw immediately from an established well of volunteers who are used to working with one another successfully. Jean Scott and Isla Solanik of Biggar expressed this idea, as did Ann Riehl of Allan. They agreed that experience in previous community projects and in working with particular people was an essential factor to explain why women were so much more involved than men. Once one woman joined the committee, she was able to call on other women with whom she had previous volunteer experience and with whom she knew she could work. As Isla Solanik explained:

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<sup>34</sup> Some excellent works on women and women's organizations include: Ann Leger Anderson, "Saskatchewan Women, 1880-1920." pp. 65-90; Julie Dorsch, " 'You Just Did What Had to Be Done': Life Histories of Four Saskatchewan 'Farmers' Wives', in "Other" Voices: Historical Essays on Saskatchewan Women. Edited by Dave DeBrou and Aileen Moffat (Canadian Press Research Center, University of Regina, 1995). pp. 116-130; Linda Rasmussen et al., eds., A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women. (Toronto: Women's Press, 1976); Eliane Silverman, The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier 1880-1920. (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984); Nadine Small, "The 'Lady Imperialists' and the Great War: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire in Saskatchewan 1914-1918," in "Other" Voices, pp. 76-93; and Georgina Taylor, "Should I Drown Myself Now or Later?: The Isolation of Rural Women in Saskatchewan and Their Participation in the Homemakers' Clubs, the Farm Movement and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, 1910-1967" in Kathleen Storrie, ed., Women, Isolation and Bonding: The Ecology of Gender. (Toronto, 1987). pp. 79-100.

Diane [Yuroshko] and I had been to this workshop, and we're all fired up, but how do we fire everybody else up? And Jean Scott has been [a friend], for years, Jean and I have been friends when it came to working together; we always seemed able to work together. So I went to see her one day and I said, "Jean you know, you and I have done a lot of things together and there's one more thing we have to do." And she said, "what's that?" And I said "I think we have to do a local history book." And she was really enthusiastic about it. She thought it was a great idea. And you can depend on her to [get going on something], you know, she'll get busy and she'll help do things and so right away we called a meeting.<sup>35</sup>

Not everyone, however, thought that women's ability to draw from an established pool of reliable and enthusiastic female volunteers was a benefit to the committees. Once again, Michael Bartolf of Oxbow sounded a few warning notes in his mixture of praise and criticism of the dominant role of women in community history. As he wrote:

Your father's statement about women doing the work in getting the history book published is very true, as I also feel that women are: more determined to complete a job once started, seem to make the time to complete what they have started, many of them are retired or semi-retired and have the time, can surround themselves with other women that they can work with, stand as a united group even though they may be on other committees, can "Bully" the men who are working with them, to "stay in line," do what they want come "hell or high water," not worry too much about what other people think or say about them....They take pride in a Community Project well done, and the list could go on for some time, but I will quit for now.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 4, 1995.

<sup>36</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow, dated August 26, 1995.



Although this passage suggests an active animosity toward including men in the project, which may have been the case for that committee, other groups in other areas found, as suggested previously, less spiteful explanations.

One important aspect that defined many of the women on history-book committees was the term "outsider." Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake, Roseanne Shockey of Allan, and Isla Solanik of Biggar indicated that a lot of their curiosity and interest in the history of their community stemmed from their "outsider" status. Each had married a local man or else had moved into the community with their husband and became part of the area, but never knew all the stories behind the people around them. Although this probably sparked a lot of their individual interest in the local stories, it also created a few problems. For example, "outsiders" had to rely almost completely on second-hand information, especially when it came to tracking down elusive previous residents. As well, "outsiders" may have more trouble convincing people to submit their stories, as Roseanne Shockey explained.<sup>37</sup> However, there were benefits as well. These "outsiders" were considered more objective than "insiders" on the committees, not involved in, or aware of, old family feuds or personal vendettas. They made ideal history-book workers because they "could accept what people wrote as history without second-guessing or adding things or taking things out."<sup>38</sup> Women who were "outsiders" certainly figured largely in the scheme of history-book compilation.

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<sup>37</sup> MMPC, Interview with Roseanne Shockey of Allan, August 4, 1995.

<sup>38</sup> MMPC, Interview with Roseanne Shockey of Allan, August 4, 1995.

So women responded exceptionally well, as a group, to the criteria of availability, education and language skills, and committee and community experience, and as a result they were at the forefront of community-history collection and preservation. But were these the only reasons? Were there indications that women, as a group, were more inclined than men to pursue community history? Were there external pressures from the communities which may have expected women to keep the stories of the communities alive? The answer is yes, on both counts.

In feminist literary scholarship, debates have raged back and forth over the issue of women and writing. Scholars have looked at this issue from every angle, to determine whether biology, psychoanalysis, social construction, reader response, and gender-genre connections influence female authorship.<sup>39</sup> The general consensus, if any can be found, is that women write about certain issues because women have different life experiences than men. In general, women, like all good authors, write about what they know, which, in many parts of rural Saskatchewan, is primarily (but not exclusively) the home, the family, and the nearby community.<sup>40</sup> Saskatchewan women were no exception. If Lady Tweedsmuir's words of encouragement to the Homemakers' groups, as quoted in chapter one, are any indication, then Saskatchewan women were "on the alert always to guard the traditions of their homes, and to see that water colour sketches and prints, poems and prose legends should find their way into these

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<sup>39</sup> For a list of articles and books on these issues, see chapter four, page 119, footnote 42.

<sup>40</sup> See Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820" in Patricia H. Labalme, ed., Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past. (New York: New York University Press, 1980). pp. 153-182.

books...."<sup>41</sup> Women seemed to have a certain proclivity for community-history collection and preservation, since it reflected a healthy interest in their surroundings.

Almost more than anything else, though, the interviewees indicated that, in Saskatchewan, women were expected to be the caretakers of a community's memory. Women often held the domestic role of the family chronicler, the recorder of information, keeper of documents and pictures, and writer of family correspondence, thank-you notes, and Christmas cards, according to several of the women interviewees. Moreover, women spearheaded community histories as a logical extension of their role within the community. After all, a history book was a community project, much along the lines of a summer fair, Remembrance Day service, box social or dance, only much more intensive and time-consuming. As Isla Solanik explained:

This community here, where this book began, has always been run by women. There's always been a Ladies' club. And all the community activities are organized by the Ladies' club. And this was just sort of an extension of that, almost. You know it's just something that in this community, that's the way it was done.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, fifteen of the books studied for this project listed a ladies' club as the main publisher, and many more stated in their introductions that the project began with the local ladies' club and expanded from there. It is important to note that several of those who were asked why women seemed to be more inclined than men to be a part of a community-history project responded with blank stares. "Well, because!!" was a

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<sup>41</sup> Donald Simpson, "Ivy-Mantled Tower and Settler's Cabin" British Journal of Canadian Studies vol. 1, no. 1, 1986. p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

common answer, one that indicated the intrinsic role community expectations played in this arena. However, Ann Riehl of Allan had the most insightful comment on the issue, particularly in light of comments on women's networking. She laughed: "Maybe we never asked the men!! I don't know. I know my husband would say no right off the bat -- that's not something he would or could do....And then maybe we never asked!"<sup>43</sup>

Although it is by now clearly evident that women were the primary caretakers of community history in Saskatchewan, many of the oral respondents were quick to point out the valuable contributions of both the men who made up the balance of the committees,<sup>44</sup> and the husbands of those women involved. Men were always at hand to track down elusive bits of information, cajole people into submitting histories, pore over homestead maps, and make exhaustive trips to the archives in Saskatoon and Regina. As well, men were willing to take over the more mundane tasks of domestic labour to free their wives to work on the books. Many community-history introductions made a point of thanking spouses for their support and understanding of "a wife who is so preoccupied with The Book that dust accumulates...the cookie jars are empty, and the days of relaxation are few and far between."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, a few interviewees argued that a successful community-history project required at least some men. Despite community expectations about the role of women as the caretakers of community

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<sup>43</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ann Riehl of Allan, August 4, 1995.

<sup>44</sup> Close to one-quarter of the committee members were men. See Table 2.1, p. 52.

<sup>45</sup> Loreburn Historical Committee, "Acknowledgements," From Mouldboard to Metric. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1978). p. iv.

history, some respondents noted that rural Saskatchewan still faced a lot of gender discrimination, and some people were more inclined to give information and family stories to a man rather than a woman. Bill Sully was very clear that "some people maybe wouldn't give a history to a woman because, huh, [she was] only a woman. Whereas a man comes along and they will talk with him."<sup>46</sup> Others shared concerns over content, and wondered whether an all-women committee would miss such a major issue as agriculture, for example.<sup>47</sup> However, these comments were meant as cautions and criticisms, rather than condemnations. The general consensus was that, as much as the men may have helped, women were, without a doubt, at the helm.

As the chapter introduction indicated, communities conscientiously selected the best of the available talent to act as the conductors of the projects, and gave them the power to collect and channel a community's voice. This placed an immense responsibility on the committees, one that, for the most part, the committees were able to undertake successfully. There were, however, some concerns and problems that came to light. Committees were as susceptible to discrimination, whether gender, ethnic, or class, as any other group.

As stated, a few men expressed concerns over the predominance of women on history-book committees, and the impact that predominance may have had. Perhaps unresolved gender problems between committee members and particular people in the community meant that stories were missed. It is a valid criticism that women with

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<sup>46</sup> MMPC, Interview with Bill Sully of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>47</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

previous committee experience together may have been too set in established patterns, and unable to respond to new ideas. As well, if a community perceived a monolithic and unresponsive wall, it could alienate community members, prompting inconsistent support of the project. As Michael Bartolf explained, there was a feeling in Oxbow that "it was the committee's history book."<sup>48</sup>

Although neither ethnic nor class strife were visible problems in the interviews or the history books, the work of such scholars as Howard Palmer and J.R. Miller suggests that nativism and racism were part of twentieth-century prairie life.<sup>49</sup> However, these issues rarely surfaced in community-history committees or in the resulting books. Since each book drew its volunteers from within its own community and area, the committees generally reflected a good ethnic cross-section, with a few exceptions. Those whose language skills barred them from participating in writing, editing, and proofreading were generally less apt to put themselves forward, which could leave a significant hole in the story. As a result, the history of the dominant language and culture could be emphasized, and those on the fringes could be muted or even left out. The one consistent and blatant omission in so many of the community histories was the Native story. Few histories from south and central Saskatchewan, even those with reservations within or near their borders had Natives on the committees, or gave more than a brief overview of Native life, and then generally only

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<sup>48</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow to Merle McGowan, dated August 26, 1995.

<sup>49</sup> H. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982); J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

life prior to pioneer settlement. As a result, these history books virtually ignored the history of one of Saskatchewan's largest groups.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, although rarely obvious in the community histories, the past century has witnessed social and class strife in Saskatchewan.<sup>51</sup> However, some conclusions can be drawn about the role of the committee as a class entity. Often, those who stood up and pushed such community projects were already part of a community "elite," an educated and devoted group of people who were inclined to put themselves forward. The underlying current was that a community-history book was good for a community, and certain people were prepared to coax, persuade, and otherwise push a community to that same assumption, whether a community really wanted one or not. Eventually, many communities were persuaded, whether by the actions of the "elite" or just plain common sense, pride, rivalry, or interest.

This chapter has explored the criteria that people had to meet to be a community-history committee member. Not only did they have to be both willing to work and interested in the project, but also they had to be available to make a massive time commitment. As well, it was necessary to be literate and educated, with committee experience and good people skills. Women were overwhelmingly able to fit this general mold. Moreover, there were certain indications that women were expected to be the caretakers of a community's memory. However, men's contributions to the committees

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<sup>50</sup> The relation between Natives and community history will be explored in more detail in chapter four.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example: Chris Morier, "Families in the Souris Coalfields, 1925-1935," unpublished MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1996; and David De Brou and Aileen Moffat, (eds.) "Other" Voices: Historical Essays on Saskatchewan Women.

were invaluable, and should be recognized. Even though the communities drew the committee membership from their own ranks, and generally achieved a good cross-section of all ethnic groups and social classes, there were a few problems and concerns. None, however, were enough to either derail the projects or even to cause much concern in the communities. Instead, the communities were happy to have found a dedicated group willing to act to the best of its abilities, as the virtual mouthpieces of a community. The only problem, as chapter three will explain, was in deciding how best to organize, gather, and publish their community's voice.



### **CHAPTER THREE**

## **COORDINATION AND COOPERATION: THE PROCESS OF COMMUNITY HISTORY**

When we began to make a history book in June of 1980, we didn't realize what we were committing ourselves to. In the three years that we have spent assembling this book that you hold, we have written countless letters and visited many homes. We have researched and advertised, proofread, filed, sorted and captioned pictures. Our families learned to dread the words, "History Book meeting tonight." We raised funds in several ways....There was more to the project than work, however, and we have received as much as we have put into the effort.<sup>1</sup>

Saskatchewan community-history committees had a colossal task: to gather, organize, and publish their community's story. No one who had not participated in such an undertaking could understand the incredible amount of work that was involved. Often, the committee members were complete greenhorns, with little idea of the size of the project at hand. In chapter two, this thesis explored the criteria used to select the community-history committees. Chapter three will take a closer look at some of the committee responsibilities, to gain a fuller understanding of the internal dynamics of a

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<sup>1</sup> Mistatim and Districts History Book Committee, "Foreward," From Forest to Field - 1903-1983: Mistatim and Districts. (Humboldt: Humboldt Publishing Ltd., 1983). p. vi.

classic committee. The rest of the chapter will outline the multifaceted process each committee undertook to compile the most complete, accurate, entertaining, and wide-ranging community history. This chapter will show how a community's support is essential to a successful history. Moreover, the coordination and cooperation needed from all levels will be emphasized.

What, then, was the first move? In true Saskatchewan co-operative fashion, meetings were often called to gauge community response. Often, those people first inspired by the idea telephoned others who they thought might be interested and then they set up a meeting. In some cases, the meetings were held in someone's home, as was the case in Wymark, Saskatchewan<sup>2</sup> or in the local community hall.<sup>3</sup> In a few places, though, it took more than one try to get a project going. In explaining how he came to be involved in the Arcola-Kisbey history book, Adrian Paton of Arcola said:

I had been approached before that, and Margaret [his wife] and I had [gone] to Regina to a seminar put on by Friesen [Printers of Altona]. And [we] came back, and we decided we didn't have enough people and not enough interest in it from the people around so we didn't do anything until the seniors came forward with the idea again and they promised to help us....<sup>4</sup>

Paton's comment, "we didn't have enough people and not enough interest in it from the people around," shows how crucial a community's response was to these books, and

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<sup>2</sup> Wymark and District History Book Committee, "How Our History Book was Started," Patchwork of Memories: Amphion, Balfour, Bigford, Blumenhof, Braddock, Falkland, Flora, Hopefield, Iris, Lens, Longfield. (Manitoba: Derksen Printers, 1985). p. ix.

<sup>3</sup> Such town meetings also occurred in Floral, LeRoy, Alsask, Semans, Biggar, and many other areas.

<sup>4</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

how important were these organizational meetings. First and foremost, the meetings initiated interest and excitement for the books. Since the people of the community generated the bulk of the information contained in these books -- in family histories, special stories and anecdotes, and precious family pictures, for example -- the whole community had to support of the project.

In reality, however, many people in the communities were supportive, but perhaps not particularly understanding of the intentions of the organizers. Those people interviewed for this project reiterated that impediment again and again. Doreen Schmidt and Charlotte Gillat of Maymont spoke of this problem.

I think people weren't ready for it [a community history]. They didn't really know what to put in....Like some people just wrote little tiny bits while other people would write a great deal....they didn't seem to know what to put in...<sup>5</sup>

Isla Solanik of Biggar explained the difficulty in this way:

By people who had seen a local history book that had been done by some other group, there was a lot of enthusiasm because they knew what we were trying to do, but there were also a lot of people in the area who had never seen a local history book and didn't know what we were trying to do. And I had one man say to me after the book came out, and he had seen it, and he said, "I didn't realize what you people were doing. You've done a great job"....And that was sort of the way the enthusiasm was. If they knew what we were doing, they were enthusiastic, but if they didn't know...they were kind of ho-hum about it....But once they knew what we were doing they made time to support it.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> MMPC, Interview with Doreen Schmidt of Maymont, July 11, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake added one more concern when she wrote, "There were a few who felt we'd be looking for the 'black sheep' of the family and the skeletons in their closets,"<sup>7</sup> and so they were somewhat suspicious of the project. Many times, families who had skeletons were more reluctant than others to contribute their story, which led to the phenomenon of "happy history."<sup>8</sup> On the whole, however, Saskatchewan communities responded with tremendous enthusiasm to the notion, and the enterprises started underway.

Once the committees measured community response, and "the consensus of opinion seemed favourable and enthusiasm began to build,"<sup>9</sup> the executive committees initiated the projects. The most common way to organize the work was to divide the research into the old school districts, and have a district representative responsible for collecting family addresses, histories and other information for each district. As Jean Scott of Biggar reasoned, "we figured that a school district was more community-wise, because actually the old school districts were communities."<sup>10</sup> It was a logical way for the committees to get a handle on the incredible amount of work.

The executives soon set up sub-committees, another way to delegate responsibility and share the workload. These sub-committees included the typists, the proofreaders, those who organized the pictures, and the editor or editing committee.

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<sup>7</sup> MMPC, Letter from Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake to Merle McGowan, dated November 30, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> The phenomenon of "happy history" is discussed in chapter five.

<sup>9</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, 1986, "Introduction," As the Furrows Turn, 1900-1985: LeRoy and District. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1986). p. vi.

<sup>10</sup> MMPC, Interview with Jean Scott of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

Bill Sully of Biggar lauded the work that the typists performed: "Well, one of the biggest helps was that we had was good typists, who could type these histories up, change the wording so that they were correct and do the proper spelling of the things. And type it so that it was ready for publication."<sup>11</sup> Although the odd committee was able to pay a small fee to its typists, the majority of the typing was performed by volunteer labour. At the very least, most stories were typed out in full twice. Few committees in the late 1970s to mid-1980s had access to computer terminals, so good typewriters were a necessity. Muriel McGowan of Paddockwood purchased a new electric typewriter at her own expense to use on the Paddockwood history. Carbon paper and white-out were necessary expenditures for many committees, as Phyllis Stauble of Alsask explained in her poem, "Compiling Our History Book:"

A wonderful invention is "whiteout" and it saves on erasers too  
Sometimes you would make just the teeniest mistake, "whiteout" to the  
rescue.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, since the mid-1980s, more and more committees have enjoyed access to efficient word-processing systems on home computers, machines which simplified the process enormously.<sup>13</sup>

Proofreading was another crucial area, where the executive committees needed extra help. It took hours and hours to proofread the stories before they could be

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<sup>11</sup> MMPC, Interview with Bill Sully of Biggar, August 4, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Phyllis Stauble, "Compiling Our History Book." Alsask History Committee, Captured Memories: A History of Alsask and District. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1983). p. viii.

<sup>13</sup> See Myra MacDonald, "Computers allow local control, higher quality." The Western Producer May 4, 1995. p. 76.

submitted to the printer, and more hours again once the committees received the galley sheets back again.<sup>14</sup> Generally, more than one person read and proofread each story, as most committees thought that "what one set of eyes didn't catch, another would." Moreover, as some of the interviewees explained, the editing and proofreading process was particularly difficult with the galley proofs, as proofreaders needed different coloured pens to designate different kinds of errors and changes.

Pictures were a significant part of these books, as the old adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words" proved itself true. The Floral book committee members introduced their book this way:

We took the advice that many of you offered regarding pictures. You said, "Don't skimp on pictures, they make the book." After sorting them into categories we selected the best and narrowed them down to approximately 1200 of the most interesting and unique pictures. We hope you enjoy them, they are truly priceless."<sup>15</sup>

When asked which was one of the most time-consuming jobs, Adrian Paton replied:

[The most time-consuming job was] the collecting and the editing type of pictures. We were quite interested in pictures. The picture section of any book is the first thing that's looked at, after they get to be a little older. When they're new, the local people read them cover to cover, but after they [the books] get older the pictures take over.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Pleasantdale and District History Book Committee, "Last Word from the Committee." Memories of the Past: History of Pleasantdale, Silver Park, Chagoness and Kinistino Indian Band #91. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1981). p. 819.

<sup>15</sup> Floral History Book Committee, "Introduction," Our Heritage: era of south and east of Saskatoon. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1985). p. iv.

<sup>16</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

Editors and picture committees found that people were sometimes reluctant to loan precious family and other photographs, particularly if the families had to send them in the mail. Many history books ran into problems with the postal strike during the early 1980s.<sup>17</sup> However, once people were reassured that their pictures would be kept safely, and returned in due course, they generously chose and sent many interesting photographs, usually far more than the committees could use. The poem "About Our Tome" from the Craik history book explained: "Pictures arrived, big ones, small ones and round ones; Some unnamed, but they came by the tons."<sup>18</sup> The picture committees were hard pressed to limit themselves to a set number of pictures, given the variety that they received.

But by far the most demanding committee position, however, was that of editor. Again and again in the interviews and the introductions to the histories analyzed in this study, people acknowledged the tremendous amount of work performed by the editors. Jean Scott told me, "I know that Isla [Solanik] gave up two years of her life, practically, for it [editing the book], you know. Everything was sent to her...and I would say that she was the mainstay of the book."<sup>19</sup> Isla Solanik spoke in vivid terms of her role as editor of North Biggar History:

And, oh just the work of it all. This house was just littered with pictures and papers and stories. And Eddie [her husband] and

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<sup>17</sup> Paddockwood and District History Book 1982, "Publishers Problems," Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982). p. 628.

<sup>18</sup> Craik History Book, "About Our Tome...," Craik: Friendliest Place by a dam site.... (Craik: Craik Weekly News, 1985). p. vii.

<sup>19</sup> MMPC, Interview with Jean Scott of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

the kids did the the cooking; nobody cleaned up. Our house was filthy for a whole year, you know, because it was just...it was a full-time job for a whole year. It was far more consuming than I had thought it was going to be....Really, it does consume your life....

[Merle Massie] And yet you still continued?

[Isla Solanik] Well, it's like motherhood. Once you're in it, you can't get out!!<sup>20</sup>

Delwyn Janzen of LeRoy spoke of the LeRoy book's editor, Bernie Weisgerber, who "took on the responsibility of reading everything....There were times when he was up till 2 o'clock in the morning...reading these things and going through them."<sup>21</sup> The LeRoy history book, As the Furrows Turn, added: "It is probably a good thing that he [Bernie Weisgerber] is a bachelor; few household routines can stand that kind of dedication."<sup>22</sup> Muriel McGowan, who was a co-editor for Cordwood and Courage, spent months typing, proofreading, and visiting the archives in Regina.<sup>23</sup>

Once committees were in place, the work began. The first action that virtually all the committees took was to write up brochures or letters about the project, telling people about it and asking for their family histories, stories, anecdotes, pictures, old documents and anything else believed to be of value for a history book. These letters were then sent to each family in the area, and also to each family that had ever resided

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<sup>20</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> MMPC, Interview with Delwyn Janzen of LeRoy, October 25, 1995.

<sup>22</sup> LeRoy and RM History Book Committee, "A Word about our Editor," As the Furrows Turn. p. viii.

<sup>23</sup> M.I. McGowan, Private Collection, Diary, Muriel McGowan, 1981-1982.



in that area, if it could be found. This proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of a history-book project. Vivian LeBar of Birsay reported:

there was a form letter sent out that was part of the letters that asked for family and community histories and stories from the past....The most time consuming job was likely the "tracking down" of past residents of the area -- we got names from R.M. maps and the provincial Archives (homestead titles, etc.)<sup>24</sup>

Hattie Wawryk of Richard echoed this assertion:

Well, [the] number one [job] was contacting people....So we divided up the area [into ten school districts] and then tr[ie]d to get as many names and addresses as possible, and then we started contacting people....It sort of just snowballed and we got more names and more names and then the histories finally started coming in...<sup>25</sup>

Others spoke of "tracking down" past residents by asking the older members of the community about any families that used to be in the area, and soon it was, "so and so was related to them. Phone so and so, or if you can find so and so, they would know where...."<sup>26</sup> and so the hints and suggestions would come in. Sometimes, though, no contact could be made, so the committees would be forced to write the history themselves, or ask someone to do it for them. The Semans history, Always a Hometown, reported, "Where there is no record of family members left whom we can

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<sup>24</sup> MMPC, Letter from Vivian LeBar of Birsay to Merle McGowan, dated spring 1996.

<sup>25</sup> MMPC, Interview with Hattie Wawryk of Richard, July 11, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, Aug. 3, 1995.

contact, we appreciate that some of our senior members have contributed short sketches of these pioneers."<sup>27</sup>

Of course, photocopying and sending out letters, making phone-calls, and buying file folders, paper and pens for the editors and typists all required money. One of the first concerns of any history-book committee was to find or create an operating fund for such start-up expenses. In the earlier years, from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, expenses were lower because the books had a smaller scope. The early local and community histories would focus more on such issues as town or school history, and less on individual people.<sup>28</sup> Those individuals written about tended to be pioneers still alive in the area from whom more first-hand information was obtainable. By the late 1970s, as so many history-book committees discovered, the early pioneers had long since passed away, and even the second generation was growing older or had moved away with the massive rural depopulation movement.<sup>29</sup> These realizations created the gargantuan, expensive, task of locating the descendants of the pioneers, necessitating a much larger operating fund to cover expenses.

Since the late 1970s, hundreds of history books in Saskatchewan were produced in part because of the money provided by the federal government's Department of

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<sup>27</sup> Semans and District Historical Society, "Introduction," Always a Hometown: Semans and District History. (Friesen Printers, 1982). p. v.

<sup>28</sup> The nature, outline, and topics of the early community histories is discussed in the chapter four.

<sup>29</sup> C.C. Zimmerman and Garry Moneo, The Prairie Community System in Canada (Development, Functions, and Needs). (Calagary: University of Calgary, 1979). pp. 4-8.

Health and Welfare, through its New Horizons program. For those communities which received a New Horizons grant,<sup>30</sup> certain criteria had to be met:

New Horizons requires that a board of 10 directors be selected from a group of people, 70% of whom are at least 60 years of age and consider themselves permanently retired from the labour force. In this way all the work is not placed on one person's shoulders and it provides for proper representation of group members. It also allows for shared responsibility in the management of the project.<sup>31</sup>

These New Horizons boards were at times central to the projects, with many of their members actively involved in research and other areas, but in some cases the boards were created solely for the purpose of collecting the New Horizons funds, and had little to do with the compilation of information or stories.<sup>32</sup> On average, grants were \$2000, and were meant to cover such specific operating expenses as photocopying, envelopes and stamps, file cards and file folders, and phonecalls. As the 1978 Department handout stated: "Monies are not available for travel, capital construction or to pay salaries for directors or project participants."<sup>33</sup> Michael Bartolf of Oxbow said, "Our funding for the day to day operations: telephone, stamps, envelopes, brochures, etc.

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<sup>30</sup> One hundred and fifteen of the 209 books used in this study (55%) acknowledged a grant from the New Horizons project. Moreover, 112 of the 157 books from 1978 to 1993 from this study (71%) accepted a New Horizons grant. It is possible that more committees received money but did not recognize the fact in their books.

<sup>31</sup> Government of Canada, New Horizons: Director's Handbook. Health and Welfare Canada, March 1988, pamphlet.

<sup>32</sup> MMPC: Letter from Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake to Merle McGowan, dated November 30, 1995; Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow to Merle McGowan, dated August 26, 1995; Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995; and Letter from Vivian LeBar of Birsay to Merle McGowan dated spring, 1996.

<sup>33</sup> Government of Canada, Social Security: National Programs 1978, The Minister of Industry, Trade & Commerce, Statistics Canada – Institutional and Public Finance Statistics Branch, Social Security Unit, Ottawa.

was obtained through a "New Horizons" grant through our local Seniors group."<sup>34</sup> The Craik history book poem, "About Our Tome.....," carried the lines:

The word came from the government that we might get some money.  
A New Horizons grant we sought so fast it wasn't funny.<sup>35</sup>

The history book poem by Phyllis Stauble of Alsask noted a few different expenses, which are worth quoting at length:

A place was needed to set up shop, and then the work could begin  
There was this room in the school basement, but the light was dim;  
Permission was given by Mayor Ted, so we cleaned up that old room  
A kindly man named Matt, installed some borrowed lights, to chase away the  
gloom.  
The secretary got busy and ordered brochures, to mail to the people for  
stories  
The finance committee has a job to do, with only just one or two worries.  
Tables, chairs, boxes and staplers; typewriters, paper clips, pencils and pen  
Are only a few of the necessary items, to make all this work easier, my  
friends.  
Not just a matter of interest, this school has been closed for some time  
So it was absolutely necessary for Helen to set up a trapline.  
Fourteen to date, have met their fate, and this gave us much satisfaction  
Because scurrying mice, are not very nice, and could lead to many  
distractions....<sup>36</sup>

Although the federal New Horizons grants were the most common source of funding, the provincial government also provided a few necessary funds. Through community-incentive grants, "duly constituted local history committees have been

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<sup>34</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow to Merle McGowan, dated Aug 26, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> Craik History Book, "About Our Tome....," Craik History Book, Craik: Friendliest Place by a dam site... p. vi.

<sup>36</sup> Phyllis Stauble, "Compiling Our History Book." Alsask History Committee, Captured Memories. p. viii.

eligible for seed money from the Saskatchewan 1980 Diamond Jubilee Corporation"<sup>37</sup> which was the crown corporation created to oversee the Celebrate Saskatchewan 1980 festivities. Saskatchewan community-history book committees that received this grant were eligible to place a "Celebrate Saskatchewan" logo or sticker in their books, in recognition of their part in the year-long events. In the books analyzed for this study, this money was either still available, or at least was still acknowledged, as late as 1982 and 1983.<sup>38</sup>

The province once again staged a provincial celebration when it created "Heritage 85," where money was made available to committees to provide the start-up costs to produce a community-history book.<sup>39</sup> However, the provincial and federal governments provided only a part of the support for these projects; municipal governments were involved as well. The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) coordinated the Wilkinson Foundation money, a fund which several communities were able to tap for history-book projects.<sup>40</sup> As well, many of the history books and committees spoke of soliciting and receiving money or other help from their local rural municipalities and town or village councils. Sometimes that help

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<sup>37</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, "Foreword," Exploring Local History in Saskatchewan. (Regina: Saskatchewan 1980 Diamond Jubilee Corporation, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> This delay is perhaps not so surprising since the projects often took an average of two years to complete.

<sup>39</sup> Several of the histories in this study since 1985 used this grant.

<sup>40</sup> The SARM fund was known as the Wilkinson Foundation. Established in 1984 by Lorne Wilkinson and family, it was a trust fund "to help projects that contribute to the betterment of rural Saskatchewan." Jenni Morton, The Building of a Province: Commemorating the 90th Anniversary of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. (Regina: Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, 1995). p. 57.

would be in the form of a small grant, free photocopying, or perhaps providing a place for the committee to work and store their information. In regard to the importance of a workshop to a committee, Adrian Paton of Arcola expounded:

We were very fortunate at that time that the town of Arcola was given the courthouse by the government -- the courthouse, and we had offices in there which added to the [atmosphere] - - everything because it was a heritage building in itself. And it was very, very good to work in. And, because we had it in town, people could drop in rather than [having it] in somebody's basement or something. You could go, you could drop in an office.<sup>41</sup>

The school basement at Alsask, even though overridden with mice, provided a similar kind of help, a central-meeting point, for the Alsask committee. Of course, those community histories that were based entirely upon a rural area, such as the North Biggar History book, did not have such resources, and basements and kitchen tables provided the needed workspace. Regardless, the projects, with their initial operating expenses covered, shifted into high gear.

With the mailing and handing out of brochures, and the involved process of contacting present and past families of the district, the committees were kept busy for several months. As the Floral history book stated, "we [the committee members] tried to get at least one [letter] to a family and depended on that person to pass the information on."<sup>42</sup> Other groups published requests for stories in several newspapers.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Floral History Committee, "Introduction," Our Heritage, p. iv. Of course, if family members were separated or feuding, the committees' requests were not passed on. This was a problem for a few committees, and as a result, stories were inadvertently missed or only partially told.

Once the letters, brochures, and other advertisements were out, committees had to wait for the responses. Of those interviewed for this project, those who did their books earlier, from 1978 to 1980, had more trouble getting responses, perhaps, as Isla Solanik noted, because they had not seen other history books and did not know what to write.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, those involved with histories published after 1980 spoke of tremendous community response, from both present and past residents, with family stories and precious pictures overloading a sometimes bewildered and bemused committee.<sup>45</sup>

With stories coming in, the committees soon found that their most daunting task lay in editing and condensing the wealth of information down to a manageable size. The Semans book said in its introduction: "Our greatest problem has been SPACE in the book. In order to do justice to all the facts of the stories, your editors have seen fit to omit expressions of philosophy, many descriptive words and phrases. We have

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<sup>43</sup> This was also true for the committees of LeRoy, Floral, Semans, North Biggar, and many others. The Western Producer was particularly supportive of these community histories, and in the Western People section, it published for free many of these appeals for information and family stories. Even today, the Producer prints committee requests from several communities every year. See, for example, Western People, March 15, 1979, p. 20.

<sup>44</sup> MMPC, Interview with Hattie Wawryk of Richard, July 11, 1995; interview with Mary Moffat of North Battleford, July 11, 1995; interview with Doreen Schmidt of Maymont, July 11, 1995; and interview with Charlotte Gillat of Maymont, July 11, 1995.

<sup>45</sup> Semans and District Historical Society, Always a Hometown, (p. v) and Floral History Committee, Our Heritage, (p. iv) are two examples that referred to the tremendous responses to their requests. However, even those books which had more trouble with procrastination and indifference were still pleased with the stories and pictures that they received, and most books made a special point of thanking those who did respond.

eliminated as much duplication among stories as possible. [committee's emphasis]."<sup>46</sup>

Adrian Paton of Arcola went a little further:

Let's face it. Not many people are writers. A lot of that stuff [the contributions] comes in terribly garbled...so editing was a big, big task. We tried to not lose any of the flavour, any of the essential things, but we did have to [edit]....We kept telling everybody the best selling magazine or book in the world is Reader's Digest, and we're gonna make a Reader's Digest version that's gonna be the best.<sup>47</sup>

Not all editors went this far. The LeRoy book noted:

Any stories that were submitted were edited for sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, etc. Some family histories were edited to make them more concise and fluent, but the general philosophy was to leave them as intact as possible. It was felt that the pioneers should be able to tell their own story in their own way. This is their story.<sup>48</sup>

Others had quite radical opinions on the issue of editing. Michael Bartolf of Oxbow, president of the Oxbow-Glen Ewen committee, felt it may have been prudent for the families to have read the edited version of their stories before the book went to print, in case the committee had edited out something that the family thought was particularly important.<sup>49</sup> Isla Solanik of Biggar was nearly at the opposite end of the spectrum. When she attended a workshop on community-history books in Saskatoon, where committees had sent representatives to talk about their problems and concerns, she felt

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<sup>46</sup> Semans and District Historical Society, "Introduction," Always a Hometown, p. v.

<sup>47</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

<sup>48</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, "Introduction," As the Furrows Turn, p. vi.

<sup>49</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow to Merle McGowan, dated August 17, 1995.



that "the problems that they talked about, they were really superficial....They talked about things like when you're printing this book, should you use the language that the writer used, or should you edit, and how much should you edit. And things that are really inconsequential."<sup>50</sup> Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, who gave the seminar Solanik attended, explained why Friesen's always emphasized the central issue of editing. He was aware of many book committees that had severe backlash from their communities because of editing concerns and disagreements.<sup>51</sup> Because of the possibility of such backlash, almost every introduction or preface to a community history contains some explanation about editing, much like that included in the Mistatim book:

We [the committee members] realize that despite all our careful checking and re-checking, there are bound to be errors and omissions for which we apologize. Because of the sheer volume of material received, we could not include all of the information and pictures that we might have wished to. We hope that no one is hurt or offended by what we have included or left out, and we apologize for any inaccuracies.<sup>52</sup>

Many of the history-book committees were aware of the possibility of trouble, and included short explanations in the books to ward off any serious problems. Indeed, judging by the responses of the communities, and the popularity of community histories, any problems or differences of opinion were few and far between.

As time went on, it became more and more apparent to each committee that some families were not sending in any information. In some cases, the blanks were

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<sup>50</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>51</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

<sup>52</sup> Mistatim and Districts History Book Committee, "Foreward," From Forest to Field. p. vi.

from families discovered on the school registers and on documents in the land titles offices and the archives, but who could not be contacted. As stated, some of these family stories could be sketched by an old timer within the community who remembered the family. At other times, committee members spent hours in the Provincial Archives of Saskatoon and Regina, the Rural Municipality (RM) offices, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation records, and the land titles offices across the province, researching family names and writing those bare-bones facts into "story form"<sup>53</sup> for the book.

Committees found it hard to accept that, at times, local families still living in the community did not submit stories. Whether it was merely procrastination or outright hostility, committees spent many hours cajoling, wheedling, begging, and coaxing recalcitrant local families into writing their family history. The Wymark history-book committee remarked on this problem, and explained how this kind of response held up so much of the rest of the book, and made the project take so much longer.<sup>54</sup> Other editors commented: "and that's, that was one thing that I found that really bothered me a lot...There were people right here, living right here, whose stories didn't get into the book, because the district editor didn't push and I just couldn't. I didn't have the time."<sup>55</sup> The committee members of the Buckland history book stated: "We are sorry that

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<sup>53</sup> Floral History Book Committee, "Introduction," Our Heritage, p. iv.

<sup>54</sup> Wymark and District History Book Committee, "How Our History Book Started," Patchwork of Memories, p. ix.

<sup>55</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

everyone concerned did not send in a story. We asked, begged, pleaded and finally gave up on some. They apparently were not interested."<sup>56</sup> A few of those interviewed remarked on how, sometimes, family members who refused one committee member's request for a history would write it if another member asked. Bill Sully suggested: "you have to approach people in the proper manner, if you're going to get the stories from them or get them to cooperate."<sup>57</sup> Sometimes, a lack of confidence in writing ability made some family members uneasy about submitting a history. In those cases, though, if the committee was aware of the problem, one of them would interview that family member and write the story for him or her.<sup>58</sup>

Most committees felt that the stories received from the community could be expanded and broadened by gathering information at the local or provincial archives. I can remember the summer of 1981, when my grandmother, Muriel McGowan, spent several weeks, on and off, in the provincial archives and provincial land titles offices in Regina, researching the homestead and school-district entries for our community. She was probably in good company, as the majority of Saskatchewan history-book committees felt it necessary to produce homestead maps of the districts, complete with the names of the original homesteaders. Some went even further, and traced the

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<sup>56</sup> Buckland History Book Committee, "Acknowledgements," Buckland's Heritage. (North Battleford: Turner-Warwick, 1980). p. ii.

<sup>57</sup> MMPC, Interview with Bill Sully of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>58</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

history of each quarter section in each district of the community.<sup>59</sup> At any rate, the Provincial Archives in Saskatoon and Regina, and the Land Titles buildings, were favourite havens for intrepid community researchers. Delwyn Janzen of LeRoy said:

First thing I did is I went to Saskatoon to the archives. And I knew they had records of homesteader, homesteader records you know, like this type of stuff...[here he pointed to the township maps] And just by sitting there talking to her [the archivist] at the archives in Saskatoon I found...other things that I could stick in the book, you know, could be added in the book. Well, she pointed me in directions, where to find this type of stuff. Most of it was in Regina so I had to go there.<sup>60</sup>

Janzen's experience was common to most committees, which turned to the archives and other sources for information not found within their own communities. However, this research was considered extra, outside the basic mandate of collecting the stories of the community members and the community groups.

What must be remembered about this research is that not only was it done entirely by volunteers, but that those volunteers paid for their own expenses while in Regina or Saskatoon. While those who made the trips gleaned interesting information on homestead titles and other points, the seed-money grants did not pay the researcher's expenses. The grants were almost universally earmarked to stay within the community, to solicit and track down the more important family stories and pictures.

Those initial grants, however, did not come close to covering the total expenses of publishing a community-history book. By far the most overwhelming cost, one that

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<sup>59</sup> One hundred and eleven of 157 books analyzed from 1978 to 1993 contained detailed homestead maps for each district.

<sup>60</sup> MMPC, Interview with Delwyn Janzen of LeRoy, October 25, 1995.

kept many editors awake at night, was the cost of printing the books professionally.<sup>61</sup>

Part of the committee's task was to contact and interview several printers, and borrow examples of their work to compare print quality, paper and binding quality, photo reproduction, and estimated cost. If the town was large enough to have a local newspaper office or a printing firm who could print the books, they were often hired for the task.<sup>62</sup> However, most community histories in Saskatchewan were printed by Friesen Printers of Altona, Manitoba, which reproduced and bound well over one-third of the books from 1978 to the present used in this study, with another significant amount printed by Turner-Warwick Printers of North Battleford. (See Table 3.1, page 89). Derksen Printers, Inter Collegiate Press, and Focus Publishing, along with a few other local companies, produced the remainder of the professionally printed histories.

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<sup>61</sup> This was especially true for Isla Solanik, who spoke extensively of this in her interview. MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>62</sup> For instance, the Biggar Independent, the Craik Weekly News, the Humboldt Journal, the Maidstone Mirror, and the Lloydminster Times printed local or nearby communities' history books.

Table 3.1. Professionally Printed Community-Histories in Saskatchewan, 1949-1993.

Printer	Professionally Printed Books	
	Number of Books	Percentage
Friesen Printer	88	42%
Turner-Warwick	25	12%
Focus Publishing	11	5%
Derksen Printers	6	3%
Inter-Collegiate Press	6	3%
Local Printing Firms	43	20.5%
No Printer	30	14.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: See Table 1.1, p. 14.

Depending on its size, length, and the cost of the printer (some were more expensive than others), a community-history book could be an extremely costly project for a small, mostly rural or small-town community to undertake. Michael Bartolf of Oxbow wrote extensively on this issue:

The publication of a community history book is [a] very time consuming project, which needs many dedicated community minded citizens who are willing to support it both financially and in any other way when called upon. It is a very big financial committment for a small community to make. In round figures our community, (of 1,100+), needed to raise \$125,000.00.<sup>63</sup>

Isla Solanik also had much to say on this point:

the biggest, the *biggest* problem, the very biggest, is finances. And you know, we asked about finances [at the meeting in Saskatoon], we said, "how much does it cost?" And the answer that everybody gives you is, "well, it depends on how

<sup>63</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow to Merle McGowan, dated September 25, 1995.

many books you want." But they won't give you any kind of a figure at all, and I know why, now. Because if you ever knew how much it was going to cost, you'd never get into it. It's terrifying....Our bill from the printer was \$101,000 dollars. And when you see that invoice, I found out what a cold sweat is. You know. And nobody gave us any indication at all what it was going to cost to publish a history book.....I'm sure if we had known how much it was going to cost, we probably would have thought twice about it [Isla Solanik's emphasis].<sup>64</sup>

To pay the printing costs, committees had to organize extensive fundraising campaigns. In most cases, the history books were presold: people put down a deposit for the books they wanted, to give the committee money to make downpayments against the printing costs. This was necessary since most printers asked for payment in installments. Once the printers delivered the books and the balance of the printing costs were due, fundraising was an absolute necessity for many committees. In some cases, the local bank or RM would carry the loan for the committee, and sometimes even waive the interest payments on the principle while the history-book committees worked to raise funds to pay off the balance. The North Biggar committee raised its funds by putting on "fowl suppers, hold[ing] different raffles and such like, and then the final funding of it was by interest-free donations from members of our group. We put up the money interest free to pay off the loan so that the history club did not have to pay interest on borrowing money."<sup>65</sup> The Wymark committee raised funds by holding:

several garage sales...which were very successful. There were raffles of a \$100 dollar bill, toy tractors from Case and John Deere, an oil painting donated by Evelyn Sapinsky,

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<sup>64</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>65</sup> MMPC, Interview with Bill Sully of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

boxes of chocolates, a quilt donated by Mrs. Susie Knelsen and an afghan made by Mrs. Katharina Schlamp. The history book committee set up a food booth at the Homecoming....Several bake sales were held...with very good results. The...school districts held potluck suppers and sold souvenir spoons with proceeds going to the history book.<sup>66</sup>

All these types of fundraising, combined with both the initial rush and extended sales of the finished books, helped to make most committees at least break even in their ventures. There were a few committees and books, however, across the province that were not financially successful, and had to be bailed out of their financial predicament by their local town or RM.<sup>67</sup> Others, such as the Arcola-Kisbey history-book committee, were very successful, and were able to donate substantial sums of money to other community projects.<sup>68</sup> In contrast to almost every other published book, however, the general consensus was that community-history books were not meant as moneymakers for either the community or the committee.<sup>69</sup>

To comprehend the motivation to produce a community history, and to put in the hours and hours of work, dedication, frustration and triumph that went into each and every one of these books, it is necessary to first and foremost remember that these books were community projects. Communities desired to have their own voice, and so chose willing and eager members of the community to guide the projects. From the

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<sup>66</sup> Wymark and District History Book Committee, "How Our History Book Started," Patchwork of Memories, p. x.

<sup>67</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

<sup>68</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

<sup>69</sup> Royce MacGillivray, "Local History as a Form of Popular Culture in Ontario." New York History vol. 65, no. 4. October 1984. p. 370.



initial meetings, through choosing committees and applying for grants, submitting family stories, anecdotes, and pictures (even if a little coaxing was necessary), and supporting the many fundraising projects, Saskatchewan communities were incredibly supportive of, and excited about, the books that sought to capture and preserve their community and individual story. Beverly Morgan expressed the importance of the community in her poem, "Our Thanks to You," in the Armley History Book, Homestead to Heritage:

We'd like to thank you very much for taking pen in hand,  
Telling of the pioneers who cleared and broke the land.  
Without their perseverance, we never would be able  
To sit and write our histories at such a well lit table.  
Your humor, wit, your way with words, have added so much to our book,  
The snapshots you've so carefully chose, all deserve a second look.  
The documents, pictures, certificates, that to you are so dear,  
We're glad to record, and to preserve them for you here.  
It has been work, but lots of fun, we've got to know our neighbors,  
What's more we have something so worthwhile, to show for all our labours  
As you read the pages through, we hope you'll overlook  
Any error that we've made, in making up our History Book.  
Your payments for our history book were much appreciated,  
To have you all behind the work, to which we've been dedicated,  
So as you read these lines, old or young, big or small,  
We'd like to thank you very much, we're so grateful to you All.<sup>70</sup>

As well, Michael Bartolf stated unconditionally: "I feel that the most important decision that was made was that the community was ready to support the publication of an area history book."<sup>71</sup> As this chapter has clearly shown, the communities and the committees worked hand-in-hand to create these community-history books, to capture and express

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<sup>70</sup> Beverly Morgan, "Our Thanks to You." Armley History Book Committee, Homestead to Heritage: History of Armley and Districts of Manlius, Armley, Silver Stream, Waterfield. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1987). no page.

<sup>71</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow to Merle McGowan, dated August 26, 1995.

their own voices. Chapter four will examine a typical community-history book in detail, to find out what the voices wanted to say, and not to say, about their communities.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **A SENSE OF COMMUNITY: THE CONTENTS OF A TYPICAL COMMUNITY-HISTORY BOOK**

In the little Saskatchewan community where I grew up, the runaway best seller last winter was a hefty 800-page tome with nary a hint of scandal, spies or illicit sex. It has something far more enticing: the name of virtually every person who ever inhabited the village of Shamrock and surrounding municipality. Like thousands of other local histories across Canada, Harvest of Memories is Shamrock's life story, told by the people who lived it. And what a story: unsung heroes and heroines, adventure, tragedy - all simply told. Its plain prose, typographical errors and 1200 stiffly posed photos are all part of its charm.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Collins, the gifted Saskatchewan writer, wrote in avid praise of his hometown community-history book. Although he could have retreated to the lofty heights of national and commercial success and looked down his nose at the decidedly local and un-scholarly book, he chose not to. Instead, he saw through to the heart of the book, in its celebration of all deeds, big and small, of all the people, places, and events that created his community. Shamrock's history book is but one example of many produced by committees across this province to celebrate and commemorate

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Collins, "Shamrock's Runaway Best Seller," Reader's Digest (September 1991). pp. 127-128.

each district. This chapter will examine these books and their subjects, and point out a few trends that dominate many community histories. Although each book committee worked very hard on emphasizing its community's uniqueness, nonetheless most books follow a certain style and format. This chapter outlines this basic blueprint, to showcase the most popular topics, which range from homestead maps, town histories, military involvement, churches, schools, businesses, recreation, to, perhaps most importantly, family history. As well, the chapter will examine what influences the time period, the government, the printer, and the editors and contributors may have had on the contents of these books. It is important to know not only what is included, but also what is not included in a typical community history. Community histories gave communities the power to rewrite their past, to emphasize a sense of community and belonging rather than strife and feuds. In short, these books celebrate, commemorate, reinvent, reinvigorate, and redefine communities.

There is a discernible difference between the subjects contained in the books written in the 1950s and 1960s to those of the late 1970s and 1980s. Along with the province's golden anniversary celebrations, many communities, schools, and volunteer groups were caught up in the first wave of history-book collection and publication.<sup>2</sup> Historian John Archer called the Golden Jubilee a "people's celebration," where communities recorded their progress, struggles and victories up to that point in their story.<sup>3</sup> About what subjects did they write? As with all books, the subject depended

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<sup>2</sup> For an examination of this first wave, see chapter one.

<sup>3</sup> J. H. Archer, Saskatchewan History. (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1980). p. 292.

very much on the authors and their background. If the book was a school project, as many were, then the school's history was emphasized, from the time the school was granted its charter, through a listing of teachers and superintendents, to concerts, sports days and other activities. In those where the church parish served as the central organizing feature, the book focussed on church groups, family participation, and church leaders. If a Homemakers' Club or a Jubilee Committee sponsored the book, then the town's history, including its businesses and social activities, as well as schools and churches, provided the basic framework.

Regardless of the sponsoring group, the early local histories in this province were much more narrative than later books, with fewer pictures (which were harder to reproduce using the available technology) and a more general focus, which exuded a sense of local folktale rather than history. Frequently, the books would identify and tell stories about such typical aspects of pioneer life as "Food," "Clothing," "Shelter," "Pleasures," and "Hardships."<sup>4</sup> As well, these early histories often contained sections of "Special Stories,"<sup>5</sup> a specific forum for anecdotal and narrative storytelling. In these segments, pioneers contributed their favourite tales of pioneer life in the community, perhaps of a particularly bad blizzard or the story of one especially good school sports day.

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<sup>4</sup> See Zelma Homemakers' Club, The Community of Zelma, 1904-1949. (N.P., 1955).

<sup>5</sup> This analysis uses the term "Special Stories" to denote those stories included in the histories that do not fit into the routine headings of town history, church, schools, clubs and organizations, the military, business or family-history sections. Generally, special stories included particular amusing community legends or anecdotes, notes on pioneer life, local tragedies such as cyclones or fires, and personal contributions, whether in poetry or prose, from citizens who wished to write something extra special about their community.

The earliest books were very short, averaging only sixty-nine pages, in comparison to the modern average of around six or seven hundred. As well, the books from the 1950s were much less detailed, and gave a more cursory look at the community than those published in the 1980s and 1990s. As an example, instead of incorporating separate entries on each local club or organization, the early books generally contained a universal history of "organizations in the area." The same held true for churches, businesses, sports, and sometimes schools as well. Therefore, although the books recorded many aspects of everyday life, the sweeping narrative and the space limitations resulted in books with more flavour than historical material. However, they were the role models for later efforts, and remain instructive of how ordinary Saskatchewan people recorded and remembered their recent past.

The most noticeable difference, by far, between the early local history endeavours and the more recent tomes is the lack of individual family histories. Only three of the histories from the 1950s used in this study devoted a section to specific family histories. Moreover, those few books usually reserved the space for only the more prominent of the pioneer families in the community.<sup>6</sup> Although it should be noted that the earliest histories were under serious space constraints,<sup>7</sup> and likely had little or no room to include many individual family stories, it should also be acknowledged that these early histories were generally not meant for mass production, distribution, and

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<sup>6</sup> Any family whose members were among the original homesteaders and who had stayed in the area long enough to participate in the community were included, if possible.

<sup>7</sup> These constraints were caused by lack of funding, limited access to sources, and expensive printing costs.

profit returns. With this in mind, the early histories had no need to mention "the name of virtually every person who ever inhabited the village...."<sup>8</sup>

Those committees collecting material for history books in the last two decades would have loved to have had access to the original pioneers and their stories that the earlier history committees almost took for granted. It is an ironic and sad fact that just when governments and other groups were starting to sponsor longer and more detailed community histories, the very people most needed and wanted had passed away. During the oral interviews and in the published introductions, committees everywhere lamented the loss of those first-hand stories. And yet, although the early histories were a celebration of pioneer life, it must be remembered that in the 1950s in Saskatchewan, many were not long past the pioneering stage.<sup>9</sup> As Saskatchewan Premier T.C. Douglas suggested in 1955, the earliest books celebrated the pioneer residents, still alive in the communities.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, the books from the 1950s were much less about community history than they were about community celebration.

The books from the 1960s and early 1970s represented a gradual transition from the local celebration books of the 1950s to the sophisticated collections of the 1980s and 1990s. They became longer, for one thing, averaging 125 pages in the 1960s and 265 pages in the early and mid-1970s. (See Table 4.1, page 99). More were printed by

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Collins, "Shamrock's Runaway Best Seller," p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Most rural Saskatchewan communities only received rural electrification in the 1950s and early 1960s. See community histories, Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library, and Archer, Saskatchewan History, p. 275.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Archer, Saskatchewan History, p. 292.

professional printing firms rather than just typed and mimeographed by the local group.<sup>11</sup> The books made an effort to include more family histories, which jumped to 52% percent of the subject matter in the sixties, and climbed to 56% percent in the 1970s. This is probably a reflection of both the growing popularity of these projects as well as an increase in audience, local sources of funding, and publicity.

Table 4.1. Mean Number of Pages in Community-History Books and Mean Number of Pages for Family History, Saskatchewan, 1950s-1990s.

Decade	Number of books studied	Mean Number Pages per Book	Mean Number Pages Family History	% of Family History
1950s	17	69	6	8.7%
1960s	20	125	65	52.0%
1970s	37	351	196	55.8%
1980s	115	624	407	65.2%
1990s	20	721	523	72.5%

Source: see Table 1.1, page 14.

By 1978, everything was in place. Both Friesen Printers and Turner-Warwick Printers were willing and able to promote and print community-history books on a commercial scale. The committees could access the federal government's New Horizon's grants and the provincial government of Saskatchewan was setting up the first of its Celebrate Saskatchewan grants. Under these influences, local and community

<sup>11</sup> Eight of the twenty books (40%) analyzed from the 1960s were professionally printed, and thirty-one of thirty-seven (84%) from the early to mid 1970s were professionally printed.



history in Saskatchewan vaulted to a completely new scale. Interest ran high in the communities as history books became, as Jean Scott of Biggar told me, "the thing to do."

As books, pamphlets, and workshops promoting and outlining the production of local histories flooded the market, more and more community groups jumped enthusiastically onto the bandwagon. The provincial government, through its archives, produced "Exploring Local History in Saskatchewan," a short, easy-to-follow guide geared specifically towards these mostly non-profit, inexperienced committees. Other books and pamphlets, from across Canada and from the American Association for State and Local History, were readily available as well.<sup>12</sup>

Several printing companies, particularly Friesen Printers out of Altona, Manitoba, sponsored workshops designed to take interested groups step-by-step through the process. These workshops, held in many towns around the province, were exceptionally well attended.<sup>13</sup> Adrian Paton of Arcola and Isla Solanik of Biggar both mentioned their attendance at various workshops and were full of praise for Friesen's and its extended efforts to help each committee do its best. The workshops dispensed advice on many issues, from finding funding, to ideas on format, layout, style, pictures, titles, and editing.<sup>14</sup> As a result, Friesen Printers was, in many ways, responsible for the

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<sup>12</sup> For a list of guides, see footnote 16, page 8.

<sup>13</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> As noted in chapter three, editing was a major concern for many committees. The issue will be dealt with again later in this chapter.

general design, layout, format, and tone of all modern community-history books in this province. Not only was it the official printer for over 40 percent of the Saskatchewan local histories, Friesen's books served as a blueprint for many other communities who had their books printed by the local newspaper office, or local printing company.<sup>15</sup>

The rest of this chapter will outline the trends and general subject matter of these modern community-history and story books to see what and who has been included and excluded in each community's written memory. Such an analysis will illuminate what ordinary, average people feel is history, and what should be recorded as a part of a community's memory, and what should not.

For those who have never seen a typical Saskatchewan community-history book, it is useful to know the general outline. Not every book follows this profile religiously, but this is an accurate distillation of the main framework. First, there is a plainly coloured hard cover, about 8 1/2 by 11 inches, over a book perhaps 1 1/2 to 2 inches thick. Inside there is a title page, complete with the names of every school district, sometimes as many as fifteen, included in the area. The title itself should draw the eye, as most are in themselves works of literature. The majority of committees would sponsor a contest, where community members were invited to submit ideas for the book's title. "From Oxen to Oil," "From Mouldboard to Metric," "Cordwood and Courage," "North to New Beginnings," "Pine Cones and Pussy Willows," "From Sod to Solar," "Always a Hometown," "They Came From Many Lands," "As the Furrows Turn," and "Wilderness to Neighborhoods" are a few of the more interesting that were chosen.

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<sup>15</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliever of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

Others not selected, but among the more intriguing, were "Gophers, Gumbo and Good People" (Lacadena) and "From Muskeg to Milestone 87" and "Survival -- Moosemeat and Blueberries" (Smeaton). As the suggestions would pour in, committees were under pressure to be diplomatic and democratic about choosing an entry, so that no accusations of favouritism would mar the book's launch (See examples, Appendix 1, Figures 1 and 2, pages 151 and 152).

In the first few pages, there is usually a table of contents, followed closely by an introduction, an acknowledgement page, and a message from the committee. Here the editors were able to express publicly their reasons for spearheading these major book projects, thank those who gave financial and other support, include a dedication (usually to the pioneers of the area, but sometimes also to the future generations), and lastly give themselves and their committees a public "pat on the back" for a long and exhausting job well done. With infinite variations, these pages reiterated several prominent themes: a quick outline of how and why the project came to be; a sense of regret that so many stories had been lost with the passage of time; a humble plea to forgive any errors or other shortcomings; a glimpse of the past and the pioneers that the books were to commemorate; and a place to thank everyone who helped out in any aspect of the project. These pages quickly set the tone of the books, as an offering to the communities from whence they came, a book to cherish and reread, as a written record of the area and the people, by the people and for the people.

Following these introductory pages, the books present the earliest history of the area. The reader finds sections on native life prior to settlement, geology, local flora

and fauna, and early settlement, although few are exhaustive, most totalling no more than a few pages. The lack of interest in native history in these books is especially informative. As noted in chapter one, these books were a celebration of pioneer history, and that, for the most part, means Euro-Canadian history. Some books, such as the North Biggar History, specifically wrote that "This 'history book' has been prepared in an effort to tell the story of the arrival of the white man in the area north of Biggar."<sup>16</sup> Only one-third of the case study books even mention Native history prior to European contact,<sup>17</sup> and the histories average only two-thirds of a page. It is interesting to note that even those communities where a Native reserve was included in the Rural Municipality (RM), or bordered the area set by the committee, were no more likely than others to include Native history in their area's story.

As well, an analyst could expect, if he or she has studied Saskatchewan history from the 1950s and 1960s, that the earliest histories were even less likely to contain Native history than the most recent compilations: this is not necessarily so. One-quarter of the books from the 1950s include local Native history, averaging just over half a page. In the 1970s, one-third include Native history, which averaged just under two-thirds of a page (See Table 4.2, page 104). The consistency of these numbers suggests that both rural and small-town pioneer descendants have an entrenched antipathy towards Saskatchewan's Native population and its history, and also that the

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<sup>16</sup> North Biggar History Book Committee, "Dedication," A Harvest of Memories: North Biggar History. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1986). p. v.

<sup>17</sup> This figure excludes fur-trade history, for that history was invariably recorded from the Euro-Canadian perspective, perhaps recounting any famous explorers who may have passed through the local district. Fur-trade history was better represented in many community histories, averaging about one page per book.

methods used by the committees to collect, preserve, and present the pioneer story are not easily adapted to Native history.

Table 4.2. Community-History Books Dealing With Native History, Saskatchewan, 1950s to 1990s.

Decade	Books Without Native History		Books With Native History		Total
	Number	%	Number	Number	%
1950s	13	76.5%	4	17	23.5%
1960s	18	90.0%	2	20	10.0%
1970s	25	67.6%	12	37	32.4%
1980s	76	66.1%	39	115	33.9%
1990s	14	70.0%	6	20	30.0%

Source: see Table 1.1, page 14.

Although no doubt there are shades of racism in every community, this study suggests that subject matter is likely the main reason for the lack of Native history in these books. Since the history book fad began with Saskatchewan Premier T.C Douglas giving communities a mandate to "do honour to the pioneer residents...to the men and women who suffered untold hardship and displayed great fortitude...in settling this province,"<sup>18</sup> pioneer, that is, Euro-Canadian, history preservation has been the central organizing theme. Even as time went on and the pioneer residents passed away, and the focus of each book grew to include all community history and the names of all community members, Native history, and especially Native family history were still virtually ignored. This is perhaps not so surprising, given the distinctive cultural

<sup>18</sup> Archer, Saskatchewan History, p. 292.

differences between those of European and other extraction and Canadian natives, particularly in terms of family and community. These figures reflect the gulf that still exists in this province between Natives and non-Natives. However, Native communities are starting to produce community histories of their own, thereby closing the gap found in pioneer-community histories.<sup>19</sup>

Actually, the Euro-Canadian committees worked hard to ensure that their books covered as many topics as possible. To return to the basic blueprint, then: the community's earliest history (usually its survey and settlement era) generally had pride of place, whether that community was defined by the outlines of the book as a Rural Municipality, a specific parish, a small town or hamlet and surrounding area, or simply a motley crue of school districts brought together for the purposes of the book. Often, this was where the committee included detailed homestead maps of the area, a fixture in 73% of the books printed and published between 1978 and 1990 (see Table 4.3, p. 106). These maps, the result of weeks spent labouring in the land titles offices, generally gave an accurate record of every homesteader and subsequent owner of each quarter section of land in the area. Drawn on a grid and printed over several pages, the maps can show patterns of community development from earliest times to the present day (see example, Appendix 1, Figure 4, page 154). As well, they are one of the hearthstones of most community-history books, prepared with much labour and

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<sup>19</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, June, 1997. See also Albina Jacknife, Elizabeth Metis Settlement: A Local History. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1978) and Robert Longpre, Ile-a-la-Crosse 1776-1976: Sakitawak Bi-Centennial. (Ile-a-la-Crosse, Bi-Centennial Committee, 1977).

presented with pride.<sup>20</sup>

Table 4.3. Community-History Books with Homestead Maps, Saskatchewan, 1950s-1990s.

Decade	Books Without Homestead Maps		Books With Homestead Maps		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
1950s	9	52.9%	8	47.1%	17
1960s	7	35.0%	13	65.0%	20
1970s	23	62.2%	14	37.8%	37
1980s	84	73.0%	31	27.0%	115
1990s	15	33.3%	5	66.7%	20

Source: see Table 1.1, page 14.

Once the area and background were established, the books generally went on to give short histories of the businesses and industries that once operated or presently resided in the area. Sometimes, depending on the size of the community and the scope of the book, this section was called "town history" and covered in one fell swoop all aspects, from town councils to various businesses. This chapter could be short or very detailed, depending both on the interests of the committee members and also on the size of the community. A book based on six rural school districts with no unifying town or service centre would have fewer business enterprises than a town the size of

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<sup>20</sup> These maps were very labour intensive to complete, and were often pointed to in the interviews as something akin to difficult academic research. It was interesting to note that this tendency to map homestead claims was confined primarily to those areas of Saskatchewan where homesteading and grain farming were predominant. In ranching areas, these maps were less likely to be a part of the history books. Only 60% of those histories from the southwest Saskatchewan contained homestead maps, while over 70% of those from the northeast included them as part of the history of the area. However, the odd history of a ranching community included instead the distinct brands of all the ranches in the area. (Merry Battler Ladies' Club, From Sage to Timber, (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1989).

Humboldt or Kindersley, for example, and the books, naturally, reflected that reality. There were, though, some businesses, such as telephone services, railroads, post offices, and industries (particularly agriculture) that could be identified in all but the very smallest of communities. These occupied a special place in most histories, as befitting their importance to the growth of each community.

Each business section revealed interesting tendencies in rural and small-town Saskatchewan. Livery barns, drays, blacksmiths, general stores, pool rooms and barber shops were all important fixtures in those early years, and were accorded their due in the books, yet are either obsolete or much diminished in importance today. Others, such as newspapers, cafes, hotels, laundries (which were often run by a local Chinese family), theatres, bakeries, garages and lumberyards, were all too often part of the history of the town, but were no longer viable services in many rural centres.<sup>21</sup>

Alongside the traditional businesses there were short histories of local banks, credit unions, local elevators and mills, and sections on oil, gas and potash if such were of importance to an area. As with other industries, the growth, heyday, and decline of a town or village can be traced by scanning through these pages. The difference between this and an academic work on the same town is that a scholarly history would focus on and outline these trends, giving intricate analysis and discussion. The focus would be on the trends and the theories, rather than the stories -- a crucial difference

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<sup>21</sup> C.C. Zimmerman and Garry Moneo, The Prairie Community System in Canada (Development, Functions, and Needs). (Calgary: University of Calgary, 1979). Zimmerman and Moneo outline three stages in community development on the prairies, from 1870 to 1930, from 1930 to 1970, and from 1970 to 1979. The authors analyze growth and decline of rural communities, as well as the growth, decline, and persistence of farm cities, independent, and dependent towns on the prairies. Their study is useful in understanding the patterns of prairie development, preservation, and degeneration.



between academic and community history. Also, if a town was in decline, a community-history committee would be reluctant to emphasize that fact -- why accentuate the negative? Pessimistic and impartial assessments were not a priority.

As each chapter unfolds, another colour is added to the community's rainbow, helping to achieve the committee's dream of finding incidents, anecdotes, and facts that make its community unique. Ed Kliwer of Friesen Printers encouraged the committees he worked with to pick at least one interesting part of their history and emphasize it. As he explained:

History needs to be written from the community, that really depicts that area, what made this area unique. Like Blaine Lake. There is such a diverse group of people, every nationality was there....Weldon, both books for Weldon, we did one for Weldon north and one for Weldon south, they had the Kelsey Trail go through it. The first post office, a log cabin if I'm right is still standing there. They made a lot out of that....I try to zero in on a few things.<sup>22</sup>

For example, the Paddockwood history book, which Friesen's printed, included the story of the first Red Cross Outpost Hospital in the British Empire. Those from the Lloyminster area capitalized on the Barr Colonists. Many from along the #55 Highway emphasized the role of cordwood, lumber, and fishing. There were also many committees across the province that devoted extra space to their ethnic identity, if their community contained a dominant ethnic group. In these ways, each community was able to single out the one factor, incident, or issue that it believed encapsulated its

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<sup>22</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliwer of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

uniqueness.<sup>23</sup>

Every book committee strove to find something different to separate their history book from the others, knowing that, in the end, all Saskatchewan communities had a certain similarity, and so their books would cover similar topics. Saskatchewan community-history books included chapters that depict the histories of the following: hospitals, doctors, and other health services; churches and cemeteries; schools and school districts; transportation and communication; local clubs and organizations; military service; sports and recreation; "Special Stories," and pages of old advertisements, old documents, and poetry submitted to the committees. Sports were generally well covered in these books; curling, hockey, and baseball took center stage, with figure skating, broomball, tennis and golf adding to the profile. Other types of recreation reported included local dances and favourite musicians, concerts, chatauqua in the southern and central regions, card tournaments and evening visiting. Military service held a special place in most histories, with over 85% of the surveyed books setting aside a special chapter, complete with pictures, of an honour roll of those who served this country (See example, Appendix 1, Figure 5, page 155). In many books, the schools and school districts compose a hefty chapter, full of pictures and stories of the old one-room schools that once dotted this province. In every section, many committees solicited old documents, from catalogues to land titles to wills and deeds,

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<sup>23</sup> Paddockwood and District History Book, Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982); East of Lloydminster Historical Society, East of Lloydminster. (Lloydminster: The Lloydminster Times, 1979); St. Laszlo Historical Committee, With Faith and Hope: St. Laszlo, Our Heritage. (North Battleford: Turner-Wawrick Printers, 1979); Big River History Book Committee, Timber Trails: History of Big River and District. (North Battleford: Turner-Wawrick Printers, 1979); Yellow Creek History Committee, Our Pride and Heritage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982).

and old advertisements from local businesses to add texture to the stories. As well, local artists and budding literary writers would often contribute ink drawings and poems, used to introduce chapter titles and fill in the odd spare spaces left in the books (See examples, Appendix 1, Figures 6-13, pages 156-163). A chapter of "Special Stories" became commonplace, as committees realized the potential of asking people to relate local stories and lore that perhaps did not belong to any family's particular story. Here, the reader could find tales of raising horses, hunting trips, accidents, cyclones and epidemics, and all the myriad of sights, sounds, and smells of a small community. Through means of literature, history, art, photography, and archival research, these community histories successfully presented both a visual and written story, to stimulate and to entertain their audience.

For those who decry that community histories are too local in focus, out of touch with larger national or international issues, the books offer some rejoinder. When over 85% of these books place military service in a place of honor, to commemorate those men and women who fought in wars not of their making, far from home, it is obvious that national issues had an impact.<sup>24</sup> As well, railroad history, the history of agriculture in the area, rural electrification, surveying, the role of women and early pioneer history sections all bear some relevance to the wider world. However, the question begs: why should local groups writing for mainly local readers care to reiterate themes that have been more than adequately dealt with by academic historians? Why write that which

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<sup>24</sup> Over 85% of the histories from 1978 to 1990 included a special section on military service. Only twice in the entire study did that number fall below 50%: the decade of 1960 and the year 1979.

has already been written? As some of the workshop speakers argued, "the 'big' topics are going to be covered by the historians, but local residents will have to be responsible for their own histories."<sup>25</sup> So, write the history of the local credit union, the regional care center, the Korychuks, McGowans and Massies. These books do nothing less than obey the age-old adage of literature and literary artists: you write best when you write about what you know.

Interspersed with all of these chapters was a liberal sprinkling of intriguing and informative old photographs which brought each book to vivid life. The photographs, as Adrian Paton of Arcola argued, constituted one of the most important parts of a community history.<sup>26</sup> Pictures of families, animals, threshing and stooking and other farm work, old automobiles, horses and carriages, old washing machines and buildings hold their value, and become even more precious as time goes on (See examples, Appendix 1, Figures 14-16, pages 164-167). These books were the repository of the visual memory of the community, the only place where a person could access many facets of the community at once. After all, since the pictures were eagerly solicited and duly returned to their owners, the general population would not have access to that early visual history without the aid of the community-history book.

This chapter has outlined how community histories relate the general history of the community, from its founding to its present day, and has explored how the histories present many aspects of daily community life, from school to church, from business to

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<sup>25</sup> Elbe Anderson, "Researching Past before it Disappears," Western People, (March 1979), p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter three, page 73.

banking, from social life to organizations, sports, and the events of the wider world. However, the real selling point of any major community history, is the family history section, which is the heart and soul of any community-history book.

In Cordwood and Courage, my hometown history book, the McGowan family comprises six pages and two photographs. As I was only eleven years old when the book was published, I have often turned to these pages to discover what year my grandparents left the burned out prairies to trek north to the oasis of Paddockwood, north of Prince Albert, or to find out what year Dad was badly burned in a school fire in Wild Rose where he was the principal. It would be impossible to count the number of times I have consulted the book for confirmation of a local marriage or a death, when it came up in conversation. It has been interesting to know that friends I have made and people I have met far from home have had an unknown connection with my hometown, one I can read about at my leisure. It takes only moments to flip to the history of that family and read their story. Even Adrian Paton, whose interview extolled the virtues of general community history, grudgingly acknowledged the appeal of the family histories:

The secretary and I have differing views. She argued for the back of the book, which is family histories, and I argued for the front of the book all the time. And she's right. She wants a dollar for every time the book's opened to the family histories and she'll give me a dollar for every time it's ever used as a reference for other things. And she'll be way ahead, all right...<sup>27</sup>

This recognition of the preeminence of family history to these community books is reflected in the statistical data. Of the books published since 1980, two-thirds of each

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<sup>27</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

book has been dedicated to telling the stories and presenting the cherished photographs of individual families.<sup>28</sup> (See Table 4.1, page 97). Conversely, community histories devote only one-third of their space to "community" history, defined here as the early history, business, schools, churches, community clubs, sports, and other issues and chapters. This is an interesting figure, especially to academic historians who are generally more interested in the "community" history than the family stories. The family histories are what separates committee-written, community-sponsored histories from any other kind of local, regional, or national histories. On these pages are written, in their own words, the life stories of those who came and built this province, and those who now reside in and care for it.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps it is for this reason that scholars such as Paul Voisey consider such community histories as "inferior" and "painful to read."<sup>30</sup> Certainly, from a scholarly point of view, the family histories (and the other contributions as well) were incomplete, neither documented nor verified by outside sources. If the purpose of the committees -- or their contributors -- was to write an academically definitive history of their area, then Voisey's and other's comments are entirely justified. But are they? Were the

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<sup>28</sup> Friesen Printers placed slightly more emphasis on this section, with an average of 69% of each book devoted to family histories. Turner-Warwick of North Battleford had just over 63%, with all other printers coming in at 58.6%.

<sup>29</sup> Although sometimes, academic historians focus on family histories and biographies, it is only when a member of that family has made an impact on politics or business outside their home community. The point is made in chapter one that academic historians are restricted to writing about someone whose biography would win the historian acclaim and tenure. See chapter one, page 27.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Voisey, "Rural Local History and the Prairie West." R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, The Prairie West: Historical Readings (Second Edition). (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992). p. 506.

committees and communities seeking to write all of their history? Were they interested in dispassionately and objectively recording every facet, bad and good, of every person, business, club, church, and school in their past? Of course not. Such an idea was unacceptable, and would be utterly rejected by any committee member as impractical and even dangerous to a community and to a community's sense of harmony. Impractical, because as Mavis Goranson of East Weyburn argued, "No book can please everyone. This is not a comprehensive, academically definitive history, that would take volumes."<sup>31</sup> And, as many of those interviewed told me, more pages meant more money, and cost was always a primary concern -- committees had enough trouble finding room for all the good stories. Jean Karyk of Kolin, Saskatchewan, also suggested that a scholarly study of a community would be boring for an average reader:

That's been done [academic local history]. It's too [complex]. It's beyond the average person. It's beyond the average person's comprehension to sit down and read all this high language and detail. Like, who cares, a lot of the detail? You want a more personal note, if it's to be interesting.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, an objective and dispassionate look into every bleak aspect of a community's history could be dangerous. Inevitably, feuds of every kind would dominate the books, tearing both the committees and the communities apart with calls of slander and libel. The committees were very careful of this issue, and edited accordingly. Those involved in the history of Young, Zelma and Districts stated clear intentions on this question:

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<sup>31</sup> Weyburn RM #67 History Book Committee, "Preface," As Far As the Eye Can See. (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1986). p. ix.

<sup>32</sup> MMPC, Interview with Jean Karyk of Kolin, October 24, 1995.

We have been ever conscious to delete any information of a questionable nature or any information received that may have caused hurt or embarrassment to anyone. In short, we endeavored to present the true history of the area and its peoples.<sup>33</sup>

To record and emphasize the more unsavoury aspects of community life would be to go directly against the main purpose of any community-history book: to create and foster a sense of unity, belonging, and collective memory, or "true history."<sup>34</sup>

Of course, history committees were well aware that what was included in the books was not the complete history of every family or organization. Since families and groups sent in the stories themselves, most contained a fair degree of whitewashing.

As Elbe Anderson wrote in Western People in 1979:

when your regional history comes out you will think, "My God: This isn't the way I heard it at all. These stories are all about saints." True. The descendants of the men and women in the stories won't be caught dead mentioning that Uncle Ben made homebrew or that Papa was once convicted of stealing a horse."<sup>35</sup>

The submitted stories cover accidents and natural disasters, from local tornadoes and

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<sup>33</sup> Young Celebration Committee, "Preface," Footsteps to Follow: A History of Young, Zelma, and Districts. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1981). p. iv.

<sup>34</sup> There is a similar idea among Canadian historians who wish to see a more "national" history. They have formed their own historical association and publication to further their cause. (See Kenneth Whyte, "Making History," Saturday Night (May 1997). pp. 17-18). The difference, however, is in both scope and degree. Community-history books have a very specific and exclusive target audience, and depend on that audience to buy the books. If the books contain offensive material, the committees may lose too many readers, and remain in debt. Academic historians rarely have to publish their own material and shoulder the printing costs. Therefore, they have more freedom than community historians to study and write. Moreover, many academics welcome controversy as a way of selling more books — such a tactic does not work in a local setting where writers have to face their neighbours daily.

<sup>35</sup> Elbe Anderson, "Regional history easy, with time, stamina, cash." Western People, March 15, 1979. p. 14.



influenza epidemics to car accidents, forest fires, house fires, and floods. The difference, it would seem, had more to do with the amount of human involvement or responsibility. After all, a flood or an epidemic would be a disaster outside of human influence; stealing and making homebrew would not. However, those stories of stealing, incarceration, divorce, suicide, illegitimacy, murder and rape, although kept alive in the oral history of an area, have no place in a community-history book with a mandate to write the most universal and least offensive stories of the area.<sup>36</sup>

So, after all of this, what do the family stories say? What do people typically submit when they know their story will be in print, preserved for all to see? And of course, the answer is, it all depends. Was the writer a bachelor or a widow? Was the writer a teacher or a farmer with little formal education? What was the family's ethnic background? How long had the family resided in the area? Was it a large family? What were its religious and political beliefs? What was the writing style -- pure facts and dates, or more anecdotal? Was the writer male or female? Was the person old or young? The questions are as infinite as the stories themselves, and no one answer would ever suffice. Some stories were long and detailed, filled with provocative glimpses of life as it was lived. Others were short, almost blunt records of birth dates, marriage dates, and deaths, a genealogist's heaven. Most fell somewhere in between. And what was frustrating for those attempting to apply rigid formulas of class and ethnicity to the books was that a family that may have had a degree of social

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<sup>36</sup> This phenomenon, which I call "happy history," is closely linked with the oral legends and oral storytelling that accompanies community history. This issue will be explored in chapter five.

prominence in an area may not have possessed a gifted writer in the family, which left them a brusque corner of the book, while another family that perhaps only resided in the district a short time may have submitted page after page of fascinating family lore. Unless the researcher was from a certain district or area, this kind of overrepresentation and underrepresentation could lead to incorrect observations and analysis.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, this thesis has pointedly disregarded issues of class, betting that caution is the better part of academic valour.<sup>38</sup>

In general, a family story contains all the elements of a family biography, with marriages, births, deaths, the family business, and perhaps family pets and pastimes added to the mix. But whether a story would say "Mary was born in 1954," or whether it would describe the snowstorm of that evening, the hospital, the reaction of the children left at home, and the anxiety of a difficult birth was entirely at the discretion of the family chronicler. And, as several of the oral correspondents argued, it was often a question of gender as well -- was the writer of the story a man or a woman?

Here this project ran into one of its most intriguing issues. Once the idea was raised, people argued in all directions. Bill Sully of Biggar contended:

I think, if anything, the histories written by the men are...very

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<sup>37</sup> This point underlines the argument that community histories were written for a specific audience, people of the community who had the necessary background knowledge of an area to fill in the details. This argument will be explored in chapter five.

<sup>38</sup> In the novel, Roses Are Difficult Here, Dr. Melquist's published conclusions about the town of Shelby, Alberta, particularly on issues of racism, class, illiteracy, abuse, and alcoholism cause tremendous reactions within the town. The novel cleverly captures the essence of the gulf between researchers and their subject communities. It was apparent that similar mistakes could be made in this thesis, if I were to impose rigid class distinctions on community and family histories. See W.O. Mitchell, Roses are Difficult Here. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

detailed as to the fact of when a person was born, and how many children they had, what their ages were, and such like, whereas the women will write about the cats and the dogs and the chickens that they had and what they did on the farm and don't go into quite so much detail about family life. And as far as history is concerned, myself, this is fine but I like to find out that such a person was two years older than his brother or that he was born in this place and the other one was born in that place at such a time and went to school here or went to school there. Their activities, in other words....<sup>39</sup>

Others argued the very opposite, that women were more inclined to meticulously recount family births, deaths, moves and other major events, while men would talk about the year they bought a new tractor or a new car, or entered a different occupation. A few of the interviewees told of stories written by men which contained no mention at all of his wife or children, let alone their names and when they were born. Still others asserted that they had no way of knowing, other than by by-lines or internal hints, whether a man or a woman wrote a story. As Delwyn Jansen of LeRoy explained:

I read the whole book but I never saw the handwriting that wrote them up....In some of the writeups you can [tell if the writer was a man or a woman] because it'll say, it's the Fred Smith story, family history, and doesn't have a byline but you can tell she's writing it because she says "he," or "my father" or "my husband" or "my brother" or whatever the case may be.<sup>40</sup>

However, Janzen threw in another observation:

I know for a fact on some of them where you write the member of the family that lived here and say "send us a history." And he'd say to the wife, "well you write it up for me," you know?

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<sup>39</sup> MMPC, Interview with Bill Sully of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> MMPC, Interview with Delwyn Jansen of LeRoy, October 25, 1995.

And she'd put down "by Fred Smith."<sup>41</sup>

This thesis can only conclude, from all of these observations, that writing, at least in terms of family and community history, was as varied in style as the writer's background, but had little to do with differences in gender except as perceived by the reader.<sup>42</sup>

One concept that dominated family-history sections was the idea of patriarchy and the family name. The idea of the nuclear family, with a man at its head, was the central organizing feature of any family history. Using this method, which was both logical and practical, the books tended to exclude women and women's stories. Although women were present throughout the books and in their creation, (as its editors, typists, and writers in about one-half or more of the contributions), they were automatically set aside in favour of writing the histories from the male family perspective. Lila Sully expressed some practical reasons for the inadequacy of women's stories in community histories:

[women's stories were difficult to get] because females changed their name [when they got married]. Males were

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<sup>41</sup> MMPC, Interview with Delwyn Jansen of LeRoy, October 25, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> There is a veritable library of books that study the connection between gender and authorship. The books cover such issues as biology, psychoanalysis, social construction and convention, domination, resistance, and acceptance, reader response, language, and the link between gender and genre. Of course, none are able to weave all of the issues into a solid, unassailable conclusion, and all are open to interpretation. What was interesting about this project was that it showed that even on a small and local level, these same debates go back and forth, without any final conclusions. For some interesting reading on gender and authorship, see: Nina Baym, Feminism and American Literary History. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Susan Coultrap-McQuin, Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1990); Mary Gerhart, Genre Choices, Gender Questions. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); Sara Mills, et al., Feminist Readings, Feminists Reading. (Hertfordshire, Great Britain: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989); Lyndal Roper, Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, sexuality and religion in early modern Europe. (London: Routledge, 1994); Joanna Russ, How to Suppress Women's Writing. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Dale Spender, The Writing or the Sex? or: why you don't have to read women's writing to know it's no good. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989).

easier to track down. The odd [woman] doesn't marry and keeps their name, but in those days, that was odd. And then the archives would tell you more about the man, the homesteader, than the woman.<sup>43</sup>

In many cases, this may have been quite logical, if the man was born and raised in the local community and his wife was an "outsider." However, typically, both the man and the woman were from the community, and unless the woman's story prior to her marriage was covered under her father's history, it was not included in the book. This put women in a "Catch-22" situation: her story no longer belonged with her father's family history if she had married a local man lived in the area, but her part in her husband's family story would often begin only with her marriage -- a fact which missed her early childhood, teenage years, and schooling.

In addition to a paucity of women's stories in the family histories, community histories often ignore "women's work," although "men's work," (from business to agriculture), is generally well documented. Only a few of the modern community histories in this survey included a section devoted to telling the story and history and presenting pictures of women's work. (See Table 4.4, page 121).

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<sup>43</sup> MMPC, Interview with Lila Sully of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

Table 4.4. Community Histories Including Women's Work, Saskatchewan 1950s-1990s.

Decade	Books Without Women's Work		Books With Women's Work		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
1950s	13	76.5%	4	23.5%	17
1960s	20	100.0%	0	0.0%	20
1970s	34	91.9%	3	8.1%	37
1980s	104	90.4%	11	9.5%	115
1990s	17	85.0%	3	15.0%	20

Source: see Table 1.1, page 14.

At first, I found it very odd, that community-history books, engineered and spearheaded by women, would be lacking in specific women's history, until Adrian Paton made some casual remarks:

I've got a file folder on women's work, but it's not a large one. For one thing, as my dad said, why would I take a picture of her milking a cow? It happened morning and night so you didn't need a picture....For one thing, flash was the thing with cameras. You could take a picture outside. And in the agriculture community, if you got a new machine or a new horse or bigger outfit you tended to take a picture of it. Whereas the women's section, they didn't. Well, like I say, there were no flash cameras, so...very few pictures taken inside a house.<sup>44</sup>

These insights give a practical reason for not including more on women's work, but of course, they do not tell the whole story. Just as in the family histories, where men were predominant, the overall book had a generally masculine slant. Roseanne Shockey of

<sup>44</sup> MMPC, Interview with Adrian Paton of Arcola, October 23, 1995.

Allan was particularly adamant on this point, as she was angered by the male biases in so many of the contributions. In answer, she put together a fabulous section on women's work and women's lives for the Allan history book.<sup>45</sup> Others, however, never even noticed this bias until later, when they saw special women's sections in other history books, or were prompted on the subject during the interviews. As Charlotte Gillat of Maymont said laughingly: "I never even, as I said before, I never even, ever even, gave [it] a thought. It hadn't even occurred to me at all that there was ever any male-female [biases]...."<sup>46</sup>

There does not seem to be any particular pattern of gender, class, or race that contributed to this oversight: in some cases, it was a man who insisted on including a women's section, in other cases, it was a woman. When the books were analyzed according to geography, women's work was as predominant in the northwest of Saskatchewan as it was in the southeast.<sup>47</sup> This phenomenon, which cut across gender and geographic lines, suggests that the lack of attention to this important facet of pioneer and community life reflects a commonly held societal view on the role of women. Women were expected to take the lead in keeping the community stories and pictures alive, but were not to use this forum to extoll their own contributions. History,

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<sup>45</sup> MMPC, Interview with Roseanne Shockey of Allan, August 4, 1995.

<sup>46</sup> MMPC, Interview with Charlotte Gillat of Maymont, July 11, 1995.

<sup>47</sup> The 209 history books were analyzed geographically by dividing the province into four regions: northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast. The boundaries were roughly the #2 highway which runs north-south, and the #5 and #16 highways, running east-west. In this way, one could draw distinctions between books and their subjects based on geographic and other broad categories. See map, Appendix 2, page 169.

as it had been for thousands of years, was ideally about men and men's lives.<sup>48</sup>

Women were underrepresented as a group in these histories, as were native people. Only about one-third of the books even mention Native history prior to European contact, and these references average only two-thirds of a page. Moreover, there were few cases of Native families submitting a history for the family sections. Since committees solicited family histories, the lack of Native family histories suggests that committees did not ask local Native families to submit their stories. Even if they were asked, it is always possible that Native families were not interested in seeing their histories included in a book that lauded the accomplishments of those whose coming so completely changed the Native way of life.<sup>49</sup>

Although it was obvious in analyzing these books that certain issues were distinctly underrepresented, the editors of these books, as chapter three argued, had an incredibly difficult job. Trying to juggle what stories to include, and what to exclude, from the enormous pile of those solicited and received was a daunting task. In addition,

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<sup>48</sup> Considering the growing role of women's history in the academic world, its current popularity could be expected to spill over into community-history writing and compilation. So far, this has not been the case. Indeed, the earliest histories were the most dedicated to preserving women's roles as pioneers: women's work was mentioned in 23% of the books from the 1950s. Perhaps this is not surprising – the earliest books were very narrative, and concerned with the daily life of the pioneers (food and clothing, for example), the preserve of women. My comment about the connection between history and men's lives is inspired by the opening arguments of many women's history books, books that have sought to change that historical bias. See footnote 34, page 58 and footnote 42, pages 119 for lists of books on women's history and women's historical studies.

<sup>49</sup> There were some exceptions to these generalities, of course. The Canwood history, Chronicles of Canwood and Districts, had several native families from the nearby reserve incorporated into the family histories. As well, These Too Were Pioneers: The Story of the Key Indian Reserve, showed how a native community could inspire a community history book, even though its contents and format were significantly different. Canwood History Book Committee, Chronicles of Canwood and Districts. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1981); and Melville, Sk. Senior's Consultant Service (Harry B. Miller), These Too were Pioneers: The Story of the Key Indian Reserve no. 65. (N.P., 1984).



each story and article had to be read critically, and at times had to be shortened, sometimes lengthened. As Isla Solanik of Biggar told me cheerfully, "we got everything, we got everything! [emphasis hers]" The problem of what to edit, and when to edit, overwhelmed most committees. Some stories, they knew, had to be carefully screened for libelous and slanderous statements that the committees felt would harm the book and stir up unnecessary strife in the communities. Others were edited for language, as Bill Sully explained: "Some of them, the wording and the spelling were just terrible, but it's amazing what sort of a history you can make out of it if you word it properly, correct the spelling, add the proper wording to what they mean, [edit out] a lot of slang..."<sup>50</sup> Most were edited for spelling and language, as well as repetition between stories since space was at a premium. However, even these seemingly innocuous changes caused major ripples within the committees as concern over hurt feelings and pride played havoc. Who should have the last word? The committee, or the family member who wrote the story? How much can a story be edited before it becomes unrecognizable to the original author? Moreover, as Michael Bartolf made clear, there was such a thing as too much editing, if the stories lost their "individualistic flavour" and became "sterile."<sup>51</sup> Although editors naturally watched for slander, libel, swear words or other non-desirable language, most committees retained colloquialisms and other harmless language idiosyncrasies, to allow the writer's voice to come through.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> MMPC, Interview with Bill Sully of Biggar, August 4, 1995.

<sup>51</sup> See quotation, pages 54-55.

<sup>52</sup> MMPC, Letter from Michael Bartolf of Oxbow to Merle McGowan, dated August 26, 1995.

While working through these problems, the editors generally faced other internal problems that seem to arise whenever there is a mix of volunteers on a committee. Almost all of the correspondents mention certain squabbles that, while few were serious enough to derail the projects, caused enough headaches for those in charge. Anything from brainstorming fundraising ideas, choosing a printer, picking a name for the book, delegating minor responsibilities, chairing meetings or deciding on a book's organization could upset overstressed and overtired committee members and shatter patterns of control and cooperation. Usually, reason and persuasion won over passion and stubbornness, but not always.<sup>53</sup> Sometimes, as in the case of Kolin's history, editor Jean Karyk's passion and stubbornness saved the book. As she remarked:

We got into some pretty fierce battles, too, over this book. We did get into some fierce shouting matches [particularly over ethnicity -- Kolin was primarily a Czechoslovakian area, but other groups were there]. I don't care if you're a Greek or an Indian. If you lived in this district, you're going to be in our book. And I don't care what nationality [you were]. We're Canadian, and it doesn't matter what our origin was. Our ancestors came here for a reason -- to get away from oppression and possibly discrimination...so we're stirring it all up again? Like, what's the point? So I stuck to my grounds and the book turned out almost exactly as I envisioned it. It's something that had to be done.<sup>54</sup>

"It's something that had to be done." Karyk's statement nicely encapsulated one of the basic points of community history -- both the communities and the committees

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<sup>53</sup> The Homemakers' group from Richard had begun collecting a history in 1955, but the project was shelved due to massive infighting among some of the committee members over the format and style of the book. MMPC, Interview with Hattie Wawryk of Richard, July 11, 1995.

<sup>54</sup> MMPC, Interview with Jean Karyk of Kolin, October 24, 1995.

agreed that creating a community-history book was a necessity, not just a luxury. Although there were fights, squabbles, hurt feelings and anger, rarely were those great enough to derail the projects. Even in the midst of bitterness, people united in the knowledge that their final project was worth it.

This chapter has been a tour of the result of those projects, a typical community history book. It has been a discovery of what issues and subjects the average Saskatchewan citizen finds interesting about the past. Moreover, this chapter has shown that the basic premise of any community history book is to emphasize its sense of community. For this reason, certain issues, such as family feuds, murders and other unsavoury scandals, and other bleak points in a community story are nearly non-existent, or at least, not emphasized. Communities across the province used these books as a wonderful opportunity to remember the past as they wanted to remember it, and as they wanted others to remember it. They celebrated the earliest beginnings of the district, its businesses, health care, recreation and sports, its schools and places of worship. The books commemorated those who opened up the country, those who fought for it, and those who made it their home. Although a researcher can pick holes in any community history, and point to issues and areas where the books are less than academically stellar (the exclusion of Native history and families and the underrepresentation of women and women's issues, for example), all the people who were interviewed in this study were proud of their book. They were proud of the way that people reached for the books, to read them for enjoyment and information, or simply to look at the pictures and remember old friends and past times. As writer

Robert Collins observed:

Purists do not call them great literature, and professional historians tend to look down their noses, [but] these are not meant to be conventional histories. They are records of the ordinary people and events that never get into official texts.... Local history reflects a strong sense of community....[it's] "people history."<sup>55</sup>

This sense of community, of writing "people history," became particularly apparent in an examination of the audience of a community history. As the final chapter will explore, these books were written overwhelmingly for the people of the community, and the response was tremendous.

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Collins, "Shamrock's Runaway Best Seller," p. 128.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE AUDIENCE, THE RESPONSE, AND THE ORAL COUNTERHISTORY: THE EVOCATIVE POWER OF COMMUNITY HISTORY.

If reading this book brings back a memory, inspires a grandparent to share more family stories and the youth to listen and learn; or inspires a family to record a more detailed personal account, or even merely helps someone to appreciate the pioneers, our purpose will have been served.<sup>1</sup>

At any given farmhouse in Saskatchewan on a frosty winter evening, with a few neighbours gathered around the card table, sooner or later the conversation could fall into gentle wrangling over a point in someone's family history. The argument intensifies until someone sensibly pulls out the community history to settle the issue. But in the course of turning to the right page, inevitably someone sees a picture or a family name that starts the conversation off in another direction.

This vivid image brings attention to a few of the most salient points of a typical

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<sup>1</sup> Admiral History Book Club, "Introduction," Admiral: Prairie to Wheatfields. (Derksen Printers, 1978). No page.

community history. In the first place, there is one in almost every rural and small-town home across Saskatchewan. Secondly, community histories are usually kept within easy reach of the inhabitants, and are used often. Thirdly, they have become valuable tools in the communities that have settled many friendly and not-so-friendly arguments. Fourthly, they spark an oral tradition that reaches far beyond the limitations of the written word. These four points conclusively demonstrate a community history's popularity, power, and pride of place within a community. If someone from outside a community should read the book, however, much of its power and appeal diminish. The book does not invoke personal memories, nostalgia, community spirit and pride. It loses its most powerful component: the ability to elicit an outpouring of oral memory. Committees knew that their history books would be read primarily by the people of their own districts, and so compiled the books with that specific audience in mind. This chapter will explore the connection between the audience and the history books, and examine the way the intended audience responded to the finished products -- by buying the books, giving feedback to the committees, and collecting and keeping information "for the next one." Moreover, this chapter will show how community histories were crafted to draw out an oral counterstory, in conjunction with the written history. The books were incomplete without the oral component, which made the intended audience crucial to the lasting success, and purpose, of community history.

Almost all of the recent mass-produced, professionally printed community histories in Saskatchewan in the last decade were launched into their communities with a special "book opening" at the local hall or school. Once the committee members

received the pallets of books from the printers, the excitement began to build. Delwyn Jansen related the marvelous story of the LeRoy committee chairman seeing the finished product for the first time:

About two weeks before Christmas, on a Saturday, the chairman...took the neighbour's grain truck [and] went to Saskatoon [to get the books from the printers]. They brought them home and he set them in his garage. He phoned me that night. He says, "the books are here, come and look. Take a look at them!" He was all excited. I have never known him to be excited. You know, he was just like a little kid in a candy store.<sup>2</sup>

When the books came in, the word went out, and the committees chose a day to reveal the books officially. Most committees greeted the day with trepidation, wondering how people would respond. Would the residents show up? Would they buy the books? Would they be happy with them? Ann Riehl of Allan recalled the Allan "book opening" with enthusiasm:

Gracious, it was overwhelming. I can remember we sent out the final letter. It said, the books are here, and this is the day we're going to have the official presentation of the books. And if you've ordered a book, come down. We're going to have a programme at the hall. Come down to the hall. You can pick up your book. They came and you don't really know how people are going to accept this. We get down to the hall. There are people coming in, coming in, and they're bringing more chairs and more chairs and the senior's group had said they would provide the coffee and squares. Well, I'm sure they figured they would have to cut those squares in half again to make sure there was enough to go round. The hall was packed. It was just....It gives me goose bumps yet to think about it. We had no idea that that's what people would think.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> MMPC, Interview with Delwyn Jansen of LeRoy, October 25, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ann Riehl of Allan, August 4, 1995.

The experience of the Allan committee was duplicated all across the province, including at Paddockwood. I remember going to the hall with my Gram, Muriel McGowan, and watching the neighbors filing in to pick up their copy, or to buy one if they had not already prepaid. There were clusters of people all around the room, turning the pages and exclaiming over pictures or reading stories intently. The atmosphere was so exciting it was almost palpable in the hall.

However, this is not to say that all the books were sold locally. Rural Saskatchewan has long been accustomed to watching its population migrate out of the province to points west, east, and south.<sup>4</sup> There were people living far away who retained fond memories of their hometowns, and rekindled their past with joy and enthusiasm through the community histories. Fred McGuinness, a writer and broadcaster, noted:

You're sitting out at the [West] Coast, you're 75 years of age and no one knows you in your highrise. But in that book, you can remember that 'when I lived in Dinsmore, I was somebody.' That's their little mark on history.<sup>5</sup>

The interviewees often mentioned the great distances their community history would travel. The further the committee had to send their history was almost a stamp of how good the book was. As Naden Hewko explained, the Cactus Lake history, for example, "went to South America and many to the United States and of course all over Canada.

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter 16, "The new west since 1940: Political and economic change." in Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). pp. 382-416.

<sup>5</sup> Myrna MacDonald, "Community history provides a valued sense of identity." in The Western Producer, May 4, 1995. p. 76.



So it was a worthwhile enterprise."<sup>6</sup>

As soon as the books were launched, the committees received massive amounts of feedback from the residents about the histories. Most simply took the time to thank the committee members for their hard work and dedication. Others dropped by to relate more interesting stories of the districts, stories that did not make it into the books. This was the beginning of the oral counterhistory, the community's oral tradition that the books elicited. Of course, even in the face of this enthusiasm, there were a few critics. Some families were angered that their stories were not included, even though each family was responsible for its own history, and the committees sincerely tried to contact everyone. Others who did not submit histories later sheepishly gave their apologies to committee members. As Delwyn Janzen of LeRoy explained, there was an ignorance of what the projects were trying to accomplish:

we hadn't had them [the books] out for three weeks and already some people were saying, "well, I wish I'd put my history in there." [So I replied] "well, that's nice, why didn't you?" "Well, we didn't figure it was gonna be a very good book. But it's an excellent book and now we wish we were in it."<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, in some communities, younger residents were more reluctant to submit their family stories. Ida Gillat of Richard claimed: "I've heard some children say, "Dad, why isn't our story here? Grandpa's is here, why isn't ours?" [Some] parents figured we

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<sup>6</sup> MMPC, Letter from Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake to Merle McGowan, dated November 30, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> MMPC, Interview with Delwyn Janzen of LeRoy, October 25, 1995.

maybe weren't as interested in the present history as the past history."<sup>8</sup>

People who had not submitted stories had a second chance to have their history published, if they were lucky enough to live on the border of more than one district, or if their district planned a supplementary community-history volume. Ann Riehl of Allan spoke of community borders and histories:

We found that our borders overlapped with Elstow, with Bradwell. And we found that some people that didn't give us a story at least, thank heavens, gave the next town a story, [be]cause they saw what the book was like. But they were the lucky ones, because they had the chance to be in both of them. At least they got into one.<sup>9</sup>

Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers commented that a good portion of Friesen's business in the last few years has come from these second volumes.<sup>10</sup> Often, these volumes were even larger and more impressive than the first community projects. People had a better idea about what to write, and in what interesting photographs to send. Moreover, people knew how the books would be viewed and used, and so collected an even wider range of stories, pictures, documents, and family lore. Sometimes, the first books inspired people to save newspaper clippings, pages from phonebooks, or simply to keep the boxes of old photographs tucked in a dusty corner of the attic instead of throwing them away. The introductions to many of the community histories expressed the hope that people would keep these old treasures, to be used "in the next book." For example, the Saltcoats committee wrote:

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<sup>8</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ida Gillat of Richard, July 11, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ann Riehl of Allan, August 4, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Myrna MacDonald, "Community history," p. 76.

This is a beginning not a completion of history gathering in the community. If you have information we have missed, if you have perceptions of events at variance with what you read, if you are aware of error, if you remember something else that could have, should have, been told please write it down, now, and send it in....Who knows how soon a sequel or update may be published.<sup>11</sup>

In producing second histories, updates, and sequels, residents and committees recognized communities as living entities, constantly changing, and constantly in need of redefinition. These second histories understood, even more than the first, that community history "is a continuing history -- what happened five years ago is already history."<sup>12</sup> The committees and the communities knew the dynamics of the relationship between the people of a community and the community's story and memory. As the residents changed, so did the history. For every story that was lost when someone died, a new story was gained when someone moved to the area. A community's story must be re-recorded from time to time to reflect those changes.

Not only were community histories created to record the stories and memories, but they were specifically crafted to evoke an oral counterstory meant to accompany the written record. Of course, people from outside the community, unfamiliar with its people and its history would not be able to participate in this activity. This is one of the central defining points of community history, and, interestingly, a point which no academic historian has expressed or understood. Perhaps this is why some community-history introductions specifically excluded scholars and academics from their audience. Mayvis

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<sup>11</sup> Saltcoats and District Historical Society, "Nobody's Perfect -- Saltcoats and District Historical Society," Saltcoats Roots and Branches. (Regina: WA Print Works, 1982). pp. iv-v.

<sup>12</sup> Myrna MacDonald, "Community history," p. 76.

Goranson of East Weyburn knew that their history would not please an academic audience, and said so in her written introduction.<sup>13</sup> The Lacadena history from 1967 opened with a short but cryptic little note:

If you are a scholar -- pass it by.  
If a critic -- close the book.  
If you are curious about the past -- read it.<sup>14</sup>

Unless a scholar read the history of his or her own hometown, and could participate in the invocation of nostalgia, memory, and shared experience, likely he or she would find community history, as did historian Paul Voisey, "painful to read."<sup>15</sup>

To understand the importance of the oral component of community history, it is necessary to examine for whom these histories were written. Many of those interviewed for this project knew that people outside a committee's target audience would not likely be interested in their book. The audience was very specific, as Vivian LeBar of Birsay stated: "intended audience was the descendants of the early pioneers, local families still here or anyone else who wanted to buy a book!"<sup>16</sup> Isla Solanik of Biggar expressed the recognition that people outside the community, and those outside a certain age within the community, would be less interested:

We [the committee] didn't really expect our children to be too enthused with it [the book] at the time. But we expect our

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<sup>13</sup> Weyburn RM #67 History Book Committee, "Preface," As Far As the Eye Can See. (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1986). p. ix.

<sup>14</sup> Lacadena Farm Women's Club, Homestead to Centennial. (N. Pub., N. P., 1967).

<sup>15</sup> See Paul Voisey, "Rural Local History and the Prairie West," in R. D. Francis and H. Palmer The Prairie West: Historical Readings (Second Edition). (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992). p. 505.

<sup>16</sup> MMPC, Letter from Vivian LeBar of Birsay, no date, spring 1996.

children to be enthused with it when they get older. But mainly we did it for ourselves and our parents, aunts and uncles or whatever, people in that age group. Cause that's -- strangers are not, basically not interested in a local history unless they knew the people. So we did it for ourselves.<sup>17</sup>

Charlotte Gillat of Maymont added another element to the issue -- quality of writing:

I think when you're reading some history books that you do not know the people [in them, and] that yeah, some of the stories you read you kinda lose interest in even reading to the end of it. [This is] partly because you don't know them, partly because of the way it's written. Whereas another history in the same book you keep reading right to the end. Perhaps that's the quality of the writing of the history itself more than anything.<sup>18</sup>

However, Gillat's comments on writing quality is directly linked to the discussion in chapter four on writing styles.<sup>19</sup> That analysis concluded that different people have different tastes, likes, and expectations, and so what one person finds boring, another could find fascinating. Therefore, Gillat's points should be taken as opinion, rather than as an insight into the quality of community history in general.

Community histories had to meet the approval of a small, yet ferociously exacting audience: the parents, siblings, neighbors, friends and enemies that made up a community. Knowing this, the committees were exceptionally careful about the stories that were included in the books. As Walter Farquharson of Saltcoats declared:

No attempt has been made to pull the pieces into any one framework or to tailor submissions to suit any one point of view. This we believe is true to our purpose and to the nature

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<sup>17</sup> MMPC, Interview with Isla Solanik of Biggar, August 3, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> MMPC, Interview with Charlotte Gillat of Maymont, July 11, 1995.

<sup>19</sup> To review this discussion, see pages 115 through 117, chapter four.

of our community. We have sought to avoid anything that might be libellous or slanderous. It is not our intention to hurt or embarrass or anger anyone, either by inclusion or exclusion, or by interpretation of events. We hope that our effort shall be deemed a fair and accurate account of our community's life.<sup>20</sup>

By excluding those stories that could cause hurt feelings and anger in a community, committees knew that their history books were incomplete, that they told only part of a community's story. Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake wrote:

One elderly lady mentioned to me how interesting it was that everyone lived such exemplary lives -- this she said with tongue in cheek as she knew several unsavoury stories about old-timers that were not published.<sup>21</sup>

This phenomenon, termed "happy history" in this thesis, was rampant in community histories. There were few stories that included the more unfortunate sides of everyday life: murder, rape, mental incapacitation, insanity, illegal activities, incarceration, divorce, and suicide. These stories were either never submitted to the committees or the editors weeded them out. One interviewee provided an insightful explanation why such stories were omitted from community histories:

Those [kinds of stories] are personal things. They're not important as far as the public goes. Like right now there's too much that hits the news -- radio, T.V. The media, they get hold of a subject and they beat it to death. And for what purpose? These are personal things that don't affect the general history of the district or the general history of the family. In some cases, maybe, they do, but...no. There were [stories]. I know of one case where there was a girl that had

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<sup>20</sup> Saltcoats and District Historical Society, "Nobody's Perfect," Saltcoats Roots and Branches, p. iv.

<sup>21</sup> MMPC, Letter from Naden Hewko of Cactus Lake to Merle McGowan dated November 30, 1995.

gone to Winnipeg I think to have an abortion and she died as a result of the abortion. But the fact in the book [was] she died on whatever date. And it doesn't say why. I mean, why dig up skeletons and create hard feelings? If those families that are involved want to make their own family book and they want to put that in there, that's their business. But it's not a public story.<sup>22</sup>

Vivian Le Bar of Birsay corresponded at length on the subject of "happy history," and observed:

Your question of the absence of scandals being written up in local history books is not that hard to answer. The bulk of the histories are done by family and friends who feel very reticent about disclosure of spectacular events such as murder, suicide, divorce, etc. The families where these events happened, and they did occur in every community, usually don't know how to deal with it when it happens -- counselling is not available and/or wasn't there at all in the pioneer past. So a favourite method is to sweep such events under the rug -- the more spectacular the happening, the greater the family's discomfort and pain....Can you feature the Thatcher family writing up their own history for a future book?...[Also, such a spectacular event] is likely something that the younger ones know nothing about and the oldsters seldom talk about -- so who would be available to put in on paper?...The people involved are too close to the tragedy to write impartially about it so it remains part of the "oral legend" of the area....<sup>23</sup>

Le Bar's reference to "oral legend" is significant. The committees knew that there were certain stories that could not be published in the books. However, they also knew that those stories did not have to be published -- they would be preserved by the oral history of the area. Ida Gillat of Richard contended that by excluding such spectacular events, community-history books provoked the oral counterstory:

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<sup>22</sup> MMPC, restricted interview.

<sup>23</sup> MMPC, Letter from Vivian Le Bar of Birsay, no date, spring 1995.

There were people that...maybe, didn't want things known about their family. But those that didn't put [the stories] in, people then wondered why and got asking questions of other people to find out why they didn't put it in. What is there in their [past] which maybe [was not included in the book]. People looked up more things that way than they did otherwise.

[Merle Massie] Looking for what was missing rather than what was there?

[Ida Gillat] That's right. Yes.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, if an "outsider" were to read that history book, he or she would be completely oblivious to any hints or clues regarding missing pieces of the family stories. A story that mentioned "mother and dad were lost to us in 1971" would seem innocent enough – ill health and bad luck, or perhaps a car accident. Such a statement could cover the real story – a jealous rage that prompted a murder and suicide – for anyone not from the community, or at least not from the age group and social circle of the people in question. However, the committees and the communities viewed the process of creating a community history as a way to reinvent, recreate, and retell their own stories in their own way. People were free to include or exclude incidents from their past as they pleased, knowing that the oral story would still be there to fill in gaps if and when needed.

Of course, not all the stories kept alive by the oral counterhistory were about such spectacular events. The majority of stories told around kitchen tables, in coffee shops and grocery stores were simply more of the happy memories either excluded or

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<sup>24</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ida Gillat of Richard, July 11, 1995.



shortened because of space constraints, or because people simply forgot to write about them. As the committee members of The Landis Record so candidly stated, "We hope our book will bring happy memories to those old-timers who are still with us. We hope it will initiate a chain of reminiscing and will lead to making contact with old friends."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, as this chapter's opening quote from the Admiral history book observed, success for the committees meant inspiring people to remember and to tell stories. Moreover, Sargent McGowan of Paddockwood and Ed Kliwer of Friesen Printers argued that the ability to inspire an oral counter-history was one of community history's greatest assets. As McGowan claimed, "These books were important because they preserved the written stories, yes. But what they did was they sparked an oral retelling of the stories, both those [stories] in the books and those that were not. And this was, by far, their most important achievement."<sup>26</sup>

How are the books used? As the opening paragraph indicated, community histories solve many arguments around many kitchen tables all over Saskatchewan. They keep alive the memories and deeds of people from the community's past, living memories that can then be incorporated into new stories. The books are the repositories of what the Weyburn committee called "the community [photo] album" where pictures of old cars, vintage fashions, antique farm machinery, old houses and elevators, and other memorabilia can be shared by all of the residents. They are the place where a community can reaffirm itself: "we were here, we were important, you

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<sup>25</sup> Landis Historical Society, "Foreward," The Landis Record. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1980). p.

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<sup>26</sup> MMPC, Interview with Sargent McGowan of Paddockwood, winter 1995.

were a part of us." They are the vehicle by which people realize that a community can mean so much more than the physical space it occupies. An understanding of what a community is and has been serves as a unifying force that can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Usually, a community history is collected from residents of an area that already have a sense of community. In these cases, the history serves as a platform for reaffirmation, re-creation, and community pride. In some cases, though, a community history created a new community. Consider the example of the North Biggar history book, which grew out of the stories submitted from a collection of rural school districts. These school districts had no particular unifying commercial center, but rather came together to create the history book for purposes of economy. However, as committee member Jean Scott noted, "certainly, those fifteen school districts have become a community themselves, you know, since the book. You know, you see the people and you know who they are."<sup>27</sup> Other school districts across the province, according to Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, came together in much the same way, and consider themselves a cohesive community as a result of their book.<sup>28</sup>

Marnie McLean, in the "Foreward" of Our Heritage History: Acadia, Bickleigh, Kildare, captured a sweeping sense of the role of community history as both celebration and reaffirmation, but also of re-creation of a community. The act of writing and presenting a community's story was an act of re-creating a community's image of itself.

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<sup>27</sup> MMPC, Interview with Jean Scott of Biggar, August 4, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> MMPC, Interview with Ed Kliewer of Friesen Printers, June 12, 1997.

McLean wrote:

One's own community is, to be sure, a very special entity. It is a personal peace associated with relationships, memories and the things of home. The study of it is an ambitious reflective undertaking....The pages that follow can be translated into many many long hours of research and hard work, spirited by co-operation and vision. They contain much useful and interesting information of historical and educational value from which a new image of the communities emerge.<sup>29</sup>

McLean's insights show how a community history was a reflective process for a community, both during its compilation and after it was finished. People could engage in reading the stories of people and events and form a new image of the residents and the area.

Community-history books have enjoyed a prolonged popularity with the people of Saskatchewan. Although there is no way to predict the future, it seems reasonable to assume that community histories will continue to capture the imaginations of Saskatchewan people. With Saskatchewan preparing to celebrate its centennial anniversary, many areas are sure to engage in a new round of collection, preservation, and storytelling. And, just as the style and format of community histories have changed since the 1950s and 1960s, the books will no doubt continue to change and reinvent themselves as new ideas, new enthusiasm, and new people step to the front of each new project. However, an essential point will remain the same: community histories will continue to be written by the people of a community, about the people of a community, and for the people of a community.

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<sup>29</sup> Our Heritage History Book Committee, "Foreward," Our Heritage History: Acadia, Bickleigh, Kildare. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1991), p. vii.

This final chapter has been an overview of the response elicited by community histories. The residents of the communities greeted their books with unbridled enthusiasm. They overwhelmed the book launches, gave valuable feedback to the committees, and collected information for subsequent books. Moreover, the books sparked an incredible oral counterhistory, that retold the missing and incomplete stories from a community's memory to a new audience. There was an intrinsic relationship between the written and the oral community history. Moreover, a community history could restrict itself to recording only "happy history," in the knowledge that the bleaker, less favourable aspects of community life would be preserved in the oral memories. This point emphasized the crucial role of the audience in community history, and showed how people had to both know and share their oral counterhistory to make the books complete. With this kind of evocative power, community histories have been the ideal vehicle for a community to reflect on itself, express itself, celebrate, reinvent, reinvigorate, and re-create itself.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **SCRIBES OF STORIES, TELLERS OF TALES**

This thesis represents the first time community history, as practised in Saskatchewan, has been systematically defined and analyzed as a distinct genre. The research and presentation of this thesis has created a new understanding of the role and purpose of a community-history book. Community history should ideally be examined from the perspective of the community historian, rather than the academic, in order to understand the gap community history was intended to fill. It is only by assessing and understanding the purpose, intent, strengths, and shortcomings of a community-history book that professional historians will be able to interact with these books creatively and successfully.

Although inspired by the concepts, ideals, and subject matter of classic history, community history has more to do with identifying and celebrating community than with reporting history. Issues of community pride, self-esteem, sentiment, inclusion, and identity are reflected through the creation of the books and the dissemination of the information contained within. Through community history, communities define

themselves, and create or re-create a unifying community image.

Chapter one explored issues of community pride, nostalgia, preservation, and self-identity. People began to look at community history as a way of preserving a past, particularly that of the pioneer era of Saskatchewan that was rapidly disappearing. Governments and other groups utilized a growing sense of nostalgia for that receding past, to encourage homecomings and provincial celebrations. Those celebrations often led to the collection of historical information, of the stories of the old-timers who had lived in an area. Once a few communities and clubs began the tradition of community-history collection and publication, other communities responded with a deep sense of pride, rivalry, and individual identity that pushed many to answer the growing call. In many areas around the province, the idea, once formed, demanded action.

A core group of people within a community usually spearheaded that call for action, recognizing both the need for and usefulness of community history. Chapter two examined the makeup of a typical community-history committee. People with interest in local stories and community history, and a concern for preserving those stories, stepped forward. Those whose daily schedules could accommodate the intensive workload generally headed these committees. The committees needed people who had a certain amount of formal education, who could read and write quickly and accurately, with good grammar and spelling capabilities. As well, the committees needed people with previous committee experience and the ability to work well with other people for an extended length of time. They also favoured people whose age and health permitted them to commit to the heavy workload. Interestingly, women were, as

a whole, best able to adapt to all of these criteria, and so formed the majority membership on most community-history committees. Moreover, aside from meeting all the above criteria, communities often expected women to organize community activities and functions. A history book was a community project, much like a bake sale, church picnic, or Valentine's Day dance. As well, many of those interviewed suggested that communities expected women to be the bearers of local history, the keepers of the collective past. As such, they were both the logical and the ideal candidates to coordinate community-history projects. However, there was a certain amount of healthy criticism and even opposition, and some felt that an ideal committee contained at least a few men for good measure. After all, as the spokespersons for a community and the liaisons between a community and its published story, the committee had to be responsive to the whole community.

Once residents accepted the idea of producing a history book, the community's enthusiasm was sparked, and the committees were more or less in place, the long and involved process of collecting a community's story, and organizing a community's voice could begin. Chapter three explained this process, and implicitly emphasized the central role a community plays throughout the project. From responding to the initial letters, to tracking down old neighbours, past residents, and their descendants, to submitting stories and pictures, and supporting various fundraising drives, the communities constantly insured the continuance, and continued success, of their community-history projects. The committees spent long hours filling in the details and doing a variety of activities including: researching additional information in the archives;

conducting oral interviews; editing, typing, and proofreading the submitted stories; comparing printers and printing costs; and soliciting government grants. It took massive amounts of coordination and support from all levels of a community to collect a community's story.

Once the committees finished editing and sorting the stories and pictures, the printers took the manuscripts and converted them into the marvellous books found in almost every community across Saskatchewan today. Chapter four was a lengthy examination of those books and what they contain. This chapter was the key to understanding that community histories were more a tribute to community than a tribute to the discipline of history. Through an examination of the contents of a typical community-history book, particularly those subjects included in and excluded from the books, a realization of the capacity of community history to create and re-create a community formed. A community could choose what it wanted to say and not to say about itself and its past. In this way, communities were able to preserve a written identity that ignored any divisive issues among families, ethnic groups, individuals, classes, and genders. The purpose of a community history was to preserve harmony and hegemony, not to promote division and strife.

However, chapter four exposed some of the problems of community history, particularly in terms of race, gender, and class. Certain cultural groups, particularly Native peoples, have a comparatively small part in community history. The role of women and women's work, as well, have received only brief and fleeting remarks, which is ironic considering the predominance of women on the committees. Gender strife



marked some internal squabbles within a few of the committees. Issues of class and community cohesion dogged some committees, particularly with respect to editing the family histories and avoiding issues of slander and libel. Although most communities worked hard to produce a history book that would be acceptable to everyone in a community, there were always a few conflicts, concerns, and criticisms.

In the end, however, the overwhelming majority of the communities were absolutely delighted with the final product. Chapter five explored the intended audience for these books, how that audience reacted, and looked at the way in which a classic community-history book elicited passionate responses, even years after its collection and publication. The committees designed the books specifically for the people of the community from which it sprang, and depended on that community to buy the books and make them successful. The overwhelmingly favourable response gratified the committees, and justified their hard work. Moreover, this chapter clearly underlined one of the most basic facts of a community history book, a point not made anywhere in the existing historiographical literature -- community history was crafted to invoke an incredible oral renaissance of community storytelling. This fact, more than any other, cemented the crucial relationship between a community history and its audience: the histories were not complete unless their audience knew and shared the accompanying oral traditions. Communities and committees were thus able to exclude certain unsavoury or otherwise unacceptable stories from the written books, knowing that that very exclusion would prompt the continuation of the stories through the community's oral memory. Community history, by this design, was not required to reveal all aspects

of a community story, unlike an academic historical work, which rarely has the benefit of an oral counter-history and must therefore explain and interpret those aspects of history that a community historian can blithely omit.

Community histories have a very different agenda than any other kind of history writing. Inspired by community pride and community identity, communities use the medium of history as a way of accessing, preserving, and provoking those issues. They have a distinct authorship, a distinctive subject matter, and a distinct audience. Community history serves the dual purpose, first, of safeguarding in a concrete, written form the stories of the individuals that lived, worked, loved, danced, fought, and died together, to showcase people as the core of each unique community, and, second, of inspiring anew the oral tradition that "clothe[s] the printed word with character, personality and with something of the soul."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.H. Archer, "Local History." Local Archives and History Conference Proceedings, 1979. p. 22.

## **APPENDIX ONE: EXAMPLES FROM COMMUNITY-HISTORY BOOKS**

The contents of this appendix represent some of the best examples of title pages, tables of contents, homestead maps, old documents and advertisements, military service photographs, poems and ink drawings, and old pictures that can be found in Saskatchewan community-history books. They illustrate the range and complexity of classic, professionally printed community histories. Every figure is an exact photocopy (reduced in size) of a page from a community history. I apologize for the quality of the photo reproduction on some of the pages. The photocopy process does not do justice to the excellent picture quality of the original books. To understand the power of community history, I suggest that you visit, the Local History Room of the Saskatoon Public Library, the Prairie History Room of the Regina Public Library, or one of the local libraries in the rural centers of Saskatchewan, where many of these community histories are kept.

**Figure 1.** Example of Title Page. Paddockwood and District History Book 1982.  
Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982).

# **CORDWOOD AND COURAGE**



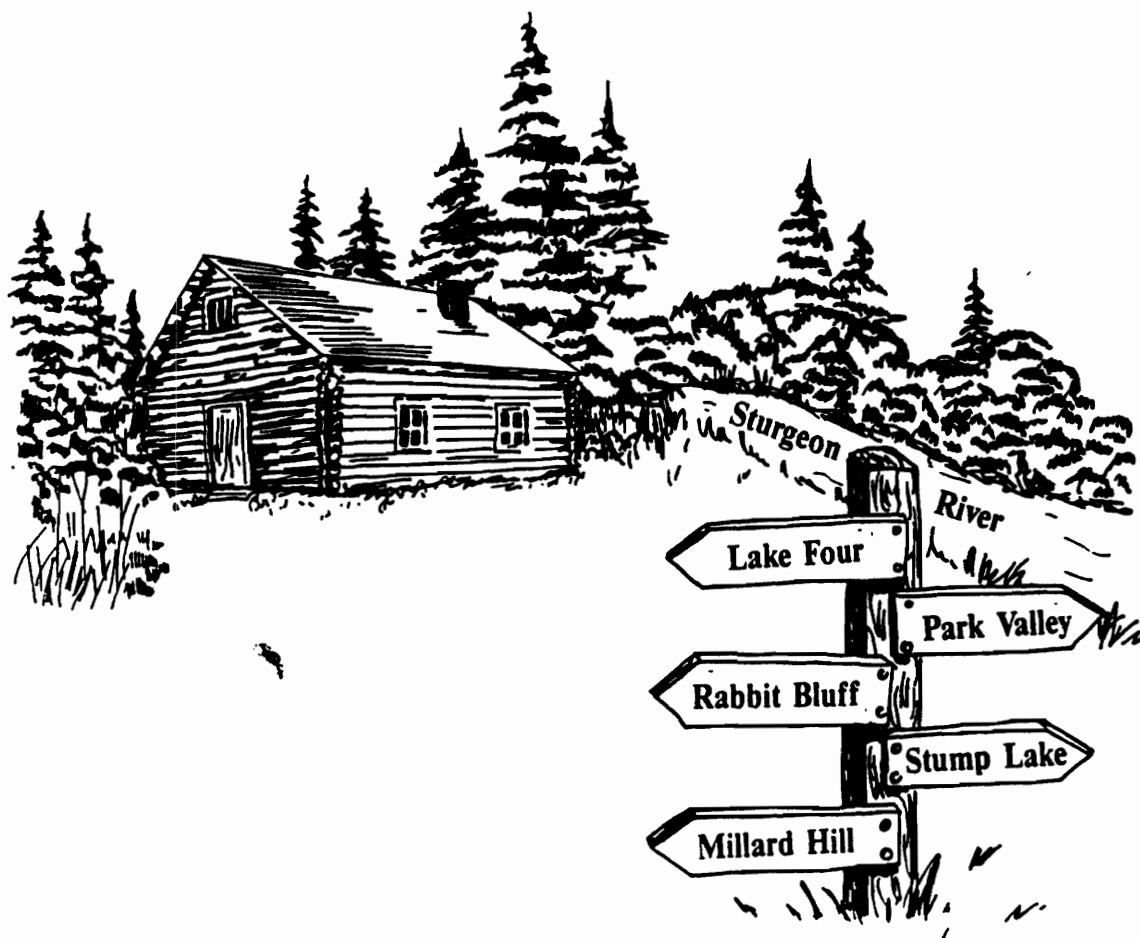
**1911-1982**

## **PADDOCKWOOD**

BEATON, CHESLEY, CHIEFSWOOD, DOROTHY I-II  
ELK HOLME, ELKRANGE, BIRCHBARK, HOWARD CREEK,  
MELBA, MOOSE LAKE, PINE VALLEY, SURREY

**Figure 2.** Example of Title Page. Park Valley History Committee. Wilderness to Neighborhoods. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1992).

# Wilderness to Neighbourhoods

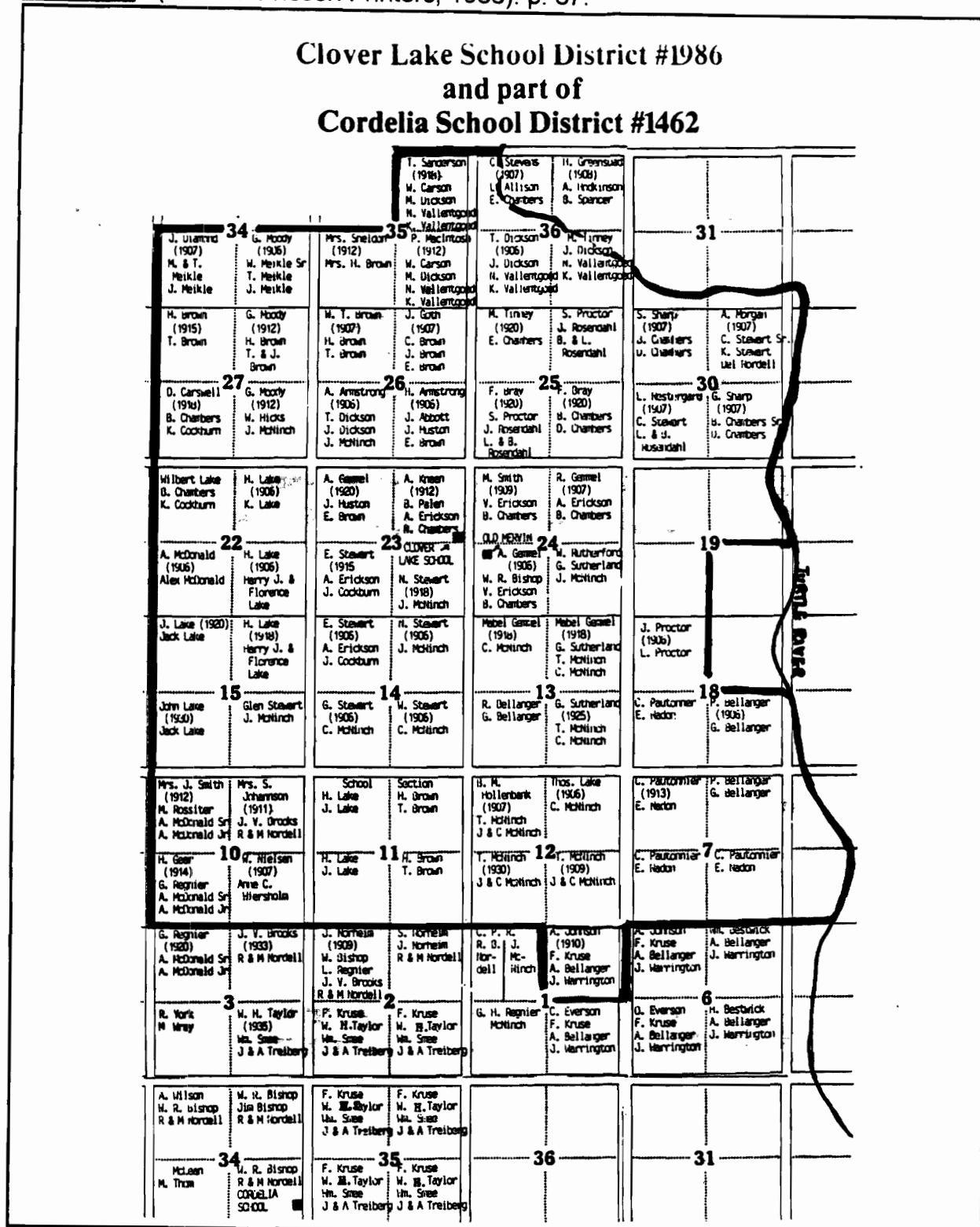


**Figure 3.** Example of Table of Contents. Sylvania Historical Society. From Forest to Farmland. (Regina: Commercial Printers, 1984). p. vi.

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**Figure 5.** Example of Military Honor Roll. Paradise Hill and District Historical Society. *Echoes of An Era*. (Altona: Frienen Printers, 1991). p. 27





**Figure 6.** Example of Old Advertisements. The Perdue History Book Club. Let's Look Back.... (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1977). p. 213.

*Dominion*

# CHAUTAUQUA FESTIVAL

*Three Joyous Days*

**MUSIC  
EDUCATION  
INSPIRATION  
ENTERTAINMENT**



J.C. Naypho



**PERDUE**  
OCTOBER 18-19-20

## DAILY PROGRAM

ELLISON-WHITE SERVICE

Afternoon Program begins 3.00

Evening Program begins 8.00

### FIRST DAY

#### AFTERNOON

Opening Exercises and Announcements.

Concert Prelude.

Popular Lecture

Ladies' Festival Orchestra

Walter E. Stern

"The Far Country"

Admission, 50c.

#### EVENING

Grand Concert

An Evening of Splendid Music and Entertainment

Admission, 75c.

Ladies' Festival Orchestra

### SECOND DAY

#### AFTERNOON

Lecture-Entertainment

"New Zealand, the South Sea Utopia"

(Mrs. Blomfield will appear in native costume)

Admission, 35c.

#### EVENING

Costume-Lecture.

"The Oriental Pageant"

(An evening of entertainment and education)

Admission, 75c.

Julius Caesar Naypho

### THIRD DAY

#### AFTERNOON

Concert Prelude.

Inspirational Lecture.

"The Reign of the Common People"

Admission, 75c.

Royal Hawaiian Quartet

W. J. Hindley

#### EVENING

Grand Closing Concert.

Enchanting Melodies of the Pacific Paradise.

Admission, \$1.00.

Royal Hawaiian Quartet

### SUPERINTENDENT

Don't fail to get acquainted with the Superintendent of this Chautauqua. Miss Lenna Briggs.

She has had a great deal of experience in Chautauqua work, and has the happy faculty of helping each one enjoy the Chautauqua who attends it. She is not only a splendid platform manager, but a charming young lady whom you will be glad to know, and who will be glad to know you. You will be delighted with her businesslike manner of managing the Chautauqua.



### PERDUE CHAUTAUQUA ASSOCIATION

Without having asked their permission to use their names on this program we are pleased to tell you that the following men and women are the public-spirited people of your community who have made it possible for you to enjoy this Festival.

These people have guaranteed a part of the expense of this fine program by obligating themselves to buy and pay for a certain number of Season Tickets. They have done this without hope of financial gain for themselves, being actuated solely by the desire to build up your community by bringing to you the splendid program herein described -

C. W. Doran  
J. Bender  
H. P. Reid  
R. D. Brooks  
O. D. Brooks  
H. D. Drake  
W. O. Mawn  
E. T. Marshall

Geo. Worthington  
A. L. Kean  
James Worthington  
S. W. Todd  
L. G. Lane  
D. K. Johnson  
A. P.

You can help your committee most by buying season tickets early.  
SEASON TICKETS, \$1 75. CHILDREN'S TICKETS, \$1.

**Figure 7.** Example of Old Advertisements. Maymont Library Board. From Sod to Solar. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1980). p. 51.

MAYMONT AND FIELDING PARISH LEAFLET

<p><b>GILLATT BROS.</b>  <b>AUTO LIVERY</b>  <b>LIVERY AND FEED STABLES</b>  <b>Maymont - Sask.</b></p> <p><b>J. D. BLACKLOCK, Maymont</b>          -----  <b>I.H.C., Case and Rumley Im-</b>  <b>plements.</b></p> <p><b>John Reid - Maymont</b>  <b>Dealer In General Merchandise</b></p> <p><small>The public will please note I am selling a large percentage of my goods at pre-war prices which means they are fully 50% less than present market values.</small></p> <p><b>Arthur H. Martin</b>          MAYMONT  <b>Builder and Contractor</b>          Estimates Furnished on Request.</p> <p><b>H. CHRISTFIELD, MAYMONT, Sask.</b>          AGENT FOR          British Crown Hail Insurance          Chevrolet Automobiles          New Williams' Sewing Machines          Massey-Harris Farm Implements</p> <p><b>MAYMONT RESTAURANT</b>  <b>And Ice Cream Parlors</b>          Meals 35c          Meals Served at All Hours.  <b>Charlie Wing - Proprietor</b></p>	<p>Phone 21  <b>G. H. MARTIN</b>          LICENSED  <b>Undertaker and Embalmer</b>  <b>MAYMONT</b></p> <p><b>IF</b> you are in the market for Lumber or building material, either car lots or small quantities, it will pay you to see  <b>F. T. MCCORKLE &amp; Co. MAYMONT</b>          BEFORE BUYING</p> <p><b>Dr. J. A. Scratch</b>          PHYSICIAN &amp; SURGEON  <b>Maymont, Sask.</b>          PHONE 18</p> <p><b>W. J. MAWHINNEY</b>  <b>DRUGS, STATIONERY AND</b>  <b>FANCY GOODS</b>          Agent for "Victor" Talking Machines  <b>MAYMONT, SASK.</b></p> <p><b>T. McBRATNEY</b>          GENERAL BLACKSMITH  <b>Maymont, - Sask.</b></p> <p><b>J. G. CASSIDY</b>          FIELDING AND SPEER  <b>Family Butcher</b>          Dealer in Fresh and Cured Meats  <b>FISH AND SAUSAGES.</b>          Visit Maymont Every Friday and Saturday</p>
--	--

**HARNESS      HARNESS      HARNESS**

SEE MAIL ORDER HOUSE PRICES ON HARNESS

SEE MARTIN'S PRICES ON HARNESS

COMPARE QUALITY

**G. H. MARTIN, MAYMONT**

Every Set Guaranteed

**Figure 8.** Example of Old Advertisements. Turtleford Historical Society. Turtleford Treasures. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1986). p. 1050.

Youthful Coats Styles  
Sponsored by Fashion



**A Dressy Style**  
33-152 There's real distinction about this too. Crown is of railroad broad and fake silk. Pale brown, up-turned at back, is of fake silk with broad on under side. Applique pink flowers and stem stitching at front. Lovely color: mimetypskin with brown; Capote with grey; mand with Capote; red with navy; reversed with grey. Hand size 2 1/4 inches. Price delivered..... **\$2.98**



19-020  
**Poirat  
Twill**  
**\$21.95**  
Male Color  
Silk Cape  
Lining

**NEWEST PRINTED TRICOTCHES**  
17-113 Rose design. Price **\$6.95**  
17-114 Orchid. Price **\$6.95**  
17-115 Blue Grey. Price **\$6.95**

To make this beautiful dress, we have used an imported tricotches—the season's newest fabric, which looks like a rich silk but crepe and wears equally well. The printed design is handsome, and the colors are set off by a trimming of tricotches in plain shades. Pearl on bottom. Front of skirt pleated. Bustle on front of the cord. Wonderfully good value as well as attractive. 14 to 46.



**Sateen**  
**\$1.35**

**40-872**  
**Black Kid  
Tie Shoe**  
40-872 Extra comfortable Eyelet-Tie shoe made from Soft Black Kid, with Cut-Out design at side. Has Flexible Hand-Turned outer sole, soft cushion insole, and Military heel with Rubber top-lift. While this shoe affords the ease required, it gives a trim appearance. Sizes 2 1/4 to 8. Width EEE. Price delivered..... **\$2.75**



**40-872**



**Extremely Durable Sateen Bloomers**  
The favorite style in bloomers—cut generously full and faced with strong sateen at waist and knees. Made from heavy strong English sateen, a silk-like material with lustre sheen. Two sizes—both easy to wash. Lengths about 26 and 27 inches. 38-133 Orchid. Price delivered..... **75¢**



**40-872**

**Stout Women's  
Sateen Slip**  
28-144 Next-to-the-skin costume slip of black twilled sateen, made in full size for the stout woman. Gathered at sides to give extra width in the skirt. Shoulders gathered above the bust. As serviceable a slip as anyone could want, good quality and easy to launder. No style could be more practical or more comfortable. Sizes 41 to 51 bust. Price delivered **\$1.35**

Figure 9. Example of Old Advertisements. South of the Gully History Committee. South of the Gully. (Lloydminster: Meridian Printing, 1979). p. 400.

# WIRRAL PIC-NIC

Will be held on

## THURSDAY JULY 15

Sports to commence at 2 p.m. Admission 50c.

---

**Cricket = Lashburn v. Wirral**

Men's Events: High Jump, Long Jump, 100 yards

Ladies' Races Wheelbarrow Race, Three-Legged Race (Married Ladies only), Egg and Spoon Race, Potato Race Also Races for Children

**Baseball 6.30 = Lone Rock v. Wirral**

TUG OF WAR'S Married Ladies vs. Single Ladies.

Men's Goodlands vs. Wirral. Lone Rock vs. Wirral.

---

FIRST CALL TO SUPPER 5 p.m.

---

## DANCE AT NIGHT

IN THE SCHOOL HOUSE

CORRY PRESS Lashburn Sask.

400

**Figure 10.** Example of Poetry and Art. Paddockwood and District History Book 1982. Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982). p. 11.

## The First Red Cross Outpost Hospital In The British Empire

### Salute the Outpost Hospital by Luba Crawford-Petruck (Helbig)

Those were the days my friend,  
When the First War took the hand  
Of many young men from their homesteads.

At the close of the war;  
Soldiers waved 'bye to their corps,  
And they journeyed on to Paddockwood.

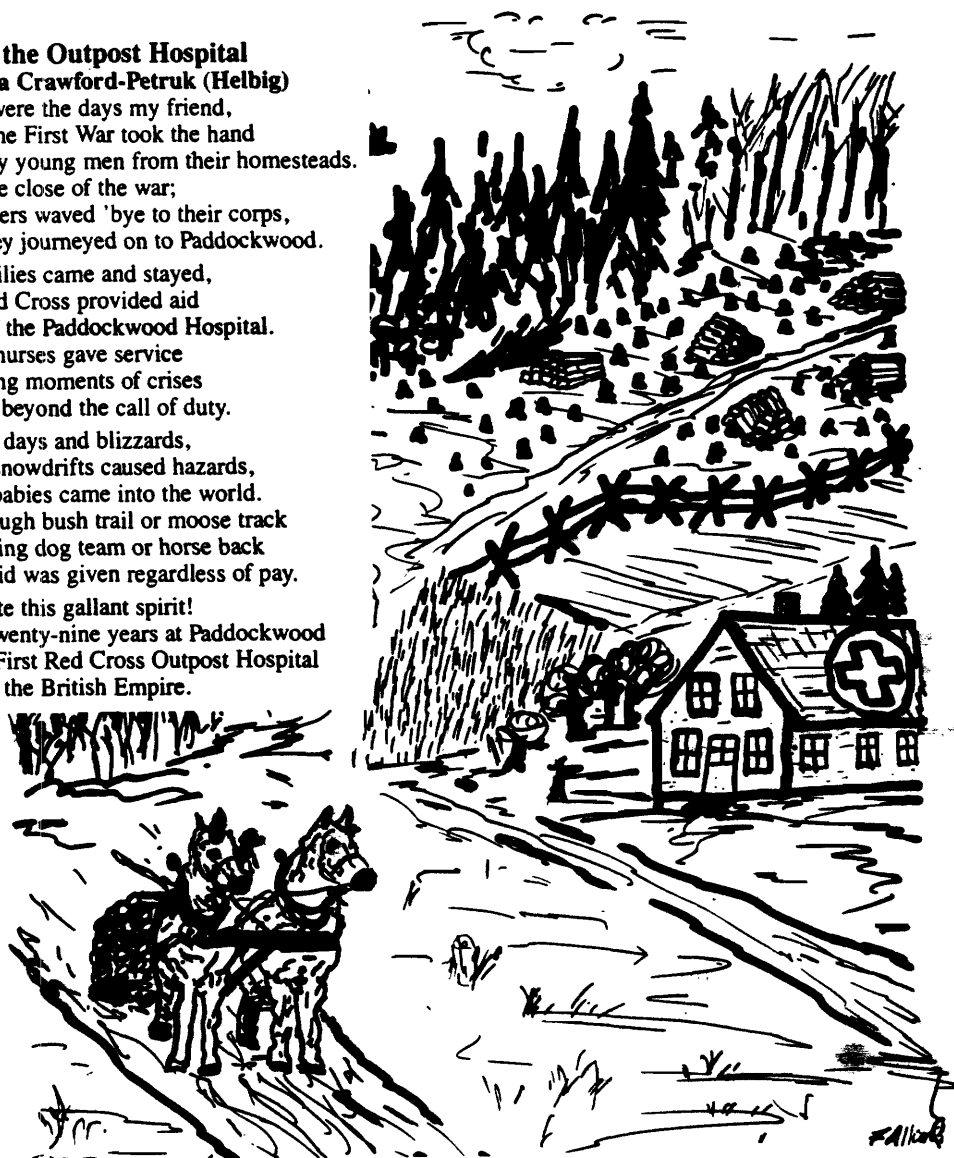
As families came and stayed,  
The Red Cross provided aid  
To staff the Paddockwood Hospital.

The nurses gave service  
During moments of crises  
Far, far beyond the call of duty.

On fair days and blizzards,  
When snowdrifts caused hazards,  
Many babies came into the world.

Through bush trail or moose track  
Driving dog team or horse back  
First Aid was given regardless of pay.

Salute this gallant spirit!  
Of twenty-nine years at Paddockwood  
In the First Red Cross Outpost Hospital  
in the British Empire.



**Figure 11.** Example Pen Sketching. Turtleford Historical Society. Turtleford Treasures. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1986). p. 991.

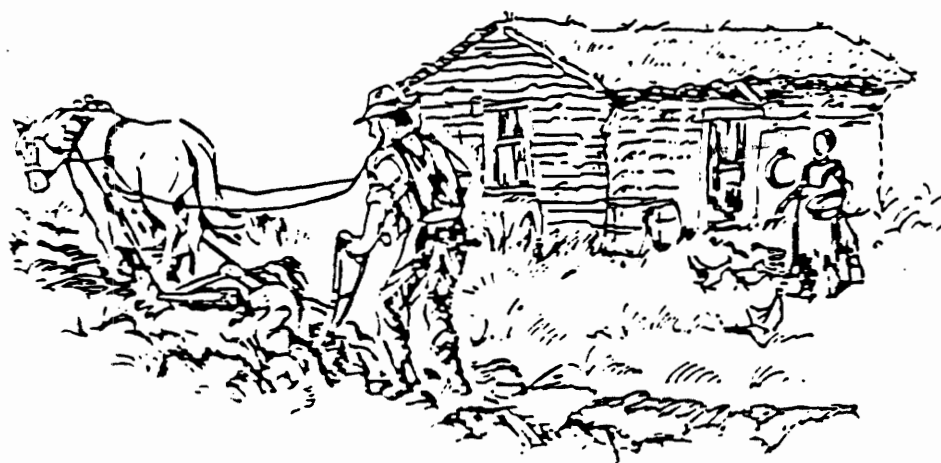
## Remembering



Sketch Credit: Neerlandia History, page 81.

**Figure 12.** Example Pen Sketching. North Biggar History Book Committee. A Harvest of Memories. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1986). p. 23.

# Elwell School District 3354



**Figure 13.** Example Poetry. Merry Battlers Ladies' Club. From Sage to Timber. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1989). p. 1.

### EVOLUTION OF HISTORY

written by Bert (Parsonage) Wakely

In memory of my dad, Graham Parsonage,  
who loved a good story

The lady sits with pen in hand, tattered notebook near

She speaks up clear and loudly so everyone can hear.

"I want to ask some questions about old Joe from Wales

He must have been some character according to the tales.

First of all, where was his place? I've several different sites

We're doing up the history book so I want to get it right."

They squint their eyes and silence reigns for minutes less or more.

Then years reverse at blurring pace and memories start to pour.

"He put up a little shack in the coulee south of Fred's half.

You know the place where our red-eyed cow had her second calf.

He wasn't there for very long, the winters got him down

He moved away in '22 and lived ten years in town."

Now chimes up a second voice "You're wrong! You're wrong I know

He moved away in '23. Recall there was no snow?

That was the year young Jones was born, I remember plain as day

We broke ten broncs that winter and never fed no hay."

"The hell you say!" Another voice has joined the growing chorus

"He moved away in '24. I still can see his horse.

A small blue roan, I raised myself and sold for 20 bills

Thought I was the richest buck in all the Cypress Hills.

He rode that mare at least a year before he went to town

John's kids got her for awhile and then she went to Brown."

Now that ain't right, I know damned well," another voice erupts

"Brown arrived in '25. He bought a place from Krupps.

That was the year I started school, I remember very well

His kids were dressed real odd, easterners you could tell.

The only horses they ever had were a big black team of mares

Sold them down south when they moved away and settled their affairs.

Went up to the Peace country you know, looking for some rain

Don't know how they made out. Never heard again."

"Now I don't mean to call you a liar or anything quite so strong

But that black team were geldings, on this I can't be wrong.

Their mother was a real dark bay that Johnny bought from Jahns.

Their father was a handsome black, stood 'bout 16 hands."

"Are you damned sure she came from Jahns? That don't seem right to me.

Dad always said she came from Jones down on the west coulee.

I know for sure Johnny sold her to Dad in '28 Wasn't long till we used her for coyote bait."

The lady sits with pen in hand, tattered notebook near

She'll have to try another day to get the details clear.



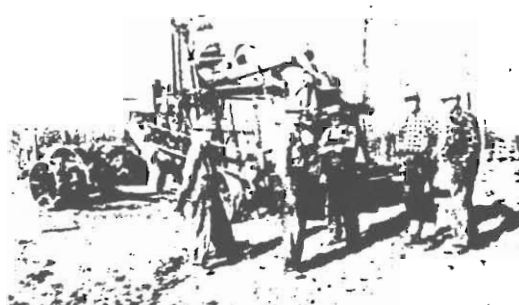
**Figure 14.** Example of Picture Sections. Paddockwood and District History Book 1982. Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982). p. 623.



Stack Threshing on Geo. Scaife Homestead — L. Schultz Outfit.



The Old Threshing Machine of Obert Wiggins.



Threshing Crew — John Johnston, Jerry Hourie, Jim Johnston, L. Rollins, Bob McKinnon.



Harold Austin Breaking with Rumely Oil Pull.



Ole Erickson Threshing in 1945.

**Figure 15.** Example of Picture Sections. Paddockwood and District History Book 1982. Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982). p. 618.



Maurice England on Load of Cordwood.



Alex and Dan Cook



Jay Campbell at Levall Store, Christopher Lake.



Beckman Sawmill — Lester Beckman, Ernie Smith, Ken and Earl Beckman.



Pete Fingledye on Pile of Shavings, Old Sawmill Site North of Paddockwood.

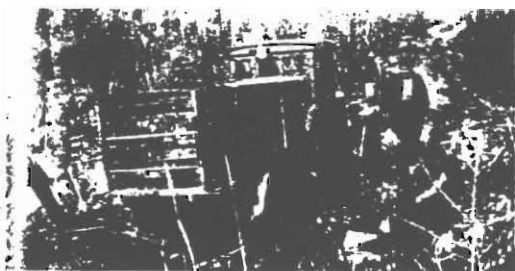


Raleigh Thorsen and Norman McGowan Peeling Ties — 1937.



Cordwood — cut and stock-piled by Ed. Nolan and Cyril Brook — 1943.

**Figure 16.** Example of Picture Sections. Paddockwood and District History Book 1982. Cordwood and Courage. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1982). p. 615.



Oldtimer Stuck in Mud — Harry Merrell — Early Twenties.



Going Harvesting — 1936 — Ken Beckan, Ernie Smith, Earl Beckman, Calvin and Bert MacDonald.



L. to R. — Ole Craig, Elmore Rayner, Angus Craig, Charlie Craig, Wes Cunningham.



Overnight Snowmobile Trip — Suggi Lake near Flin Flon — Nick Czychowski and crew.



Pete Hogan Ski-Doo.

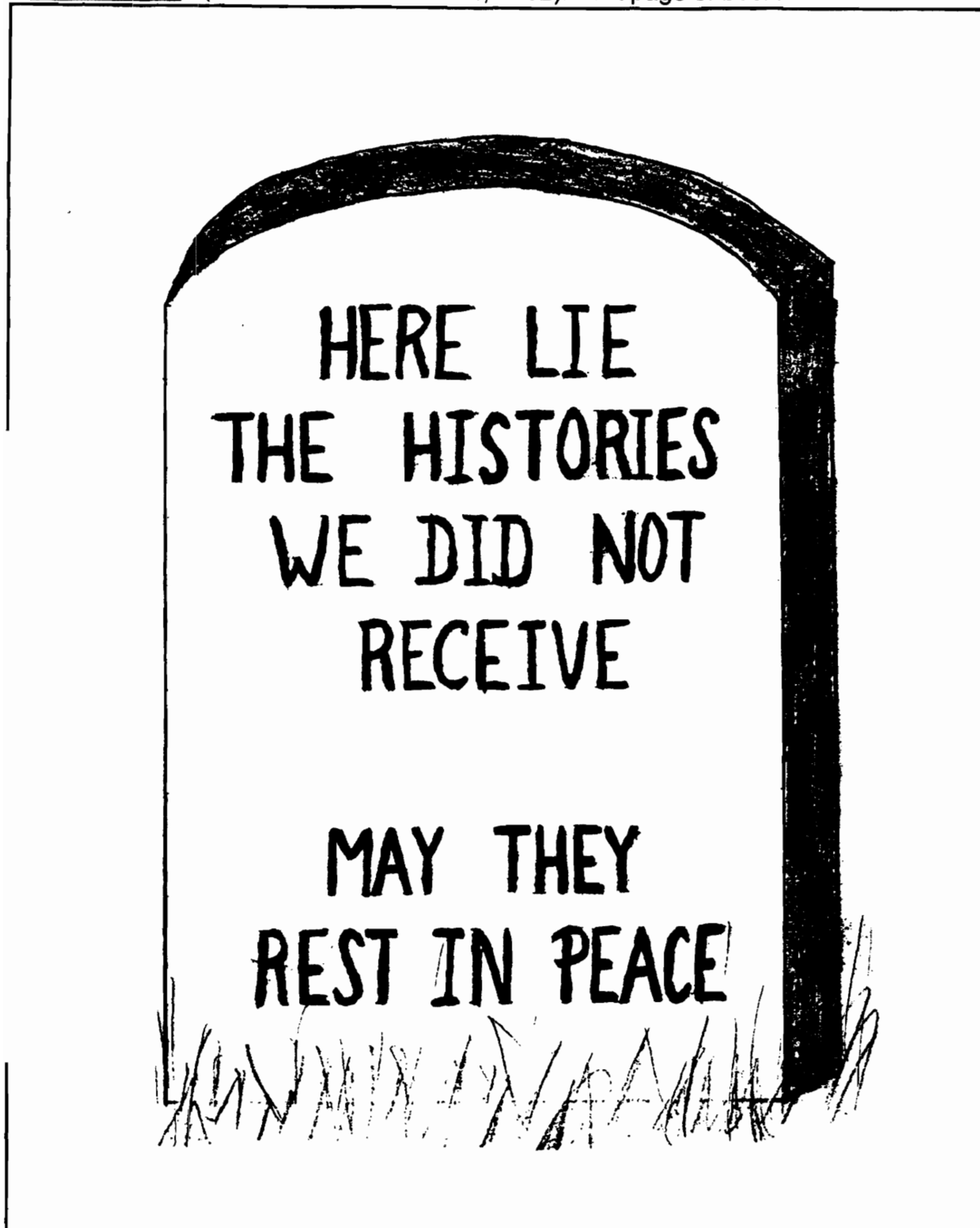


Charles Ashdown — Age 15 — and his Homemade Bicycle.



Bob and Betty Milligan.

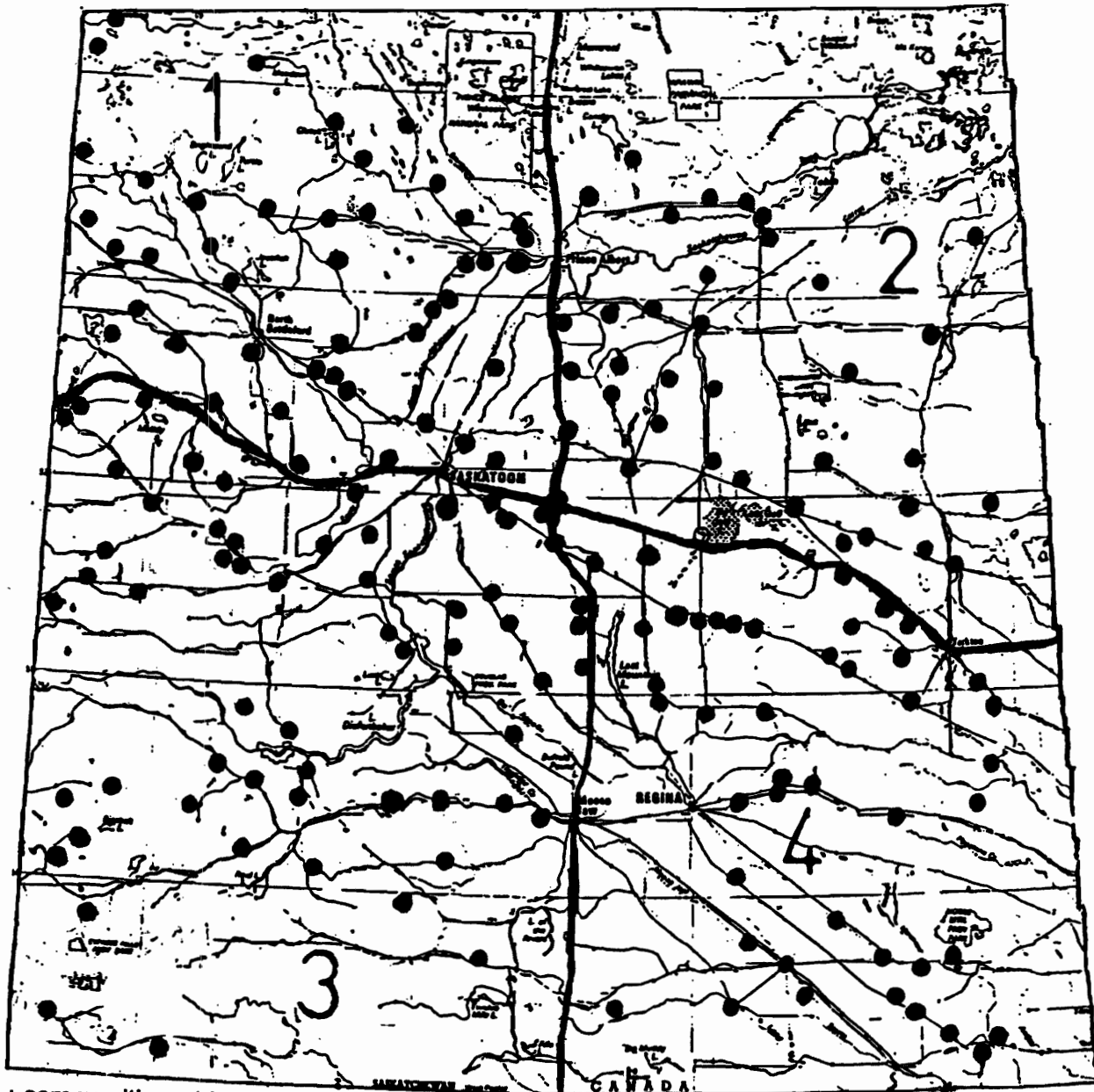
**Figure 17.** Example Pen Sketching. Park Valley History Committee. Wilderness to Neighborhoods. (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1992). Last page of book.



## **APPENDIX TWO: MAP OF SASKATCHEWAN AND LIST OF COMMUNITIES**

The following map of Saskatchewan has been modified to give a visual representation of the small towns and nearby major centers that produced the community histories used in this thesis analysis. You will notice that the northern half of Saskatchewan is not represented on the map. This reflects the virtual absence of histories produced by the northern communities of this province. The solid lines show the four geographic areas of the province -- northwest (1), northeast (2), southwest (3), southeast (4) -- used to compare the histories by region. Following the map, there is an alphabetical listing of all the communities represented in this thesis, both those from the data analysis and those where oral interviews were conducted.

**Map 1. Community Histories in Saskatchewan, Sample, 1949-1993.**



● : communities which published community histories

Source: Adapted from The Atlas of Canada and the World. (Milwaukee: George Phillip Raintree, Inc., 1979). pp. 56-57.

## List 1. Communities.

Acadia	Davis	Hendon
Adanac	Debden	Herbert
Admiral	Deer Ridge	Herschel
Alameda	Delisle	Hillmond
Alsask	Demaine	Hillsburgh
Arcola	Dewar Lake	Hoosier
Arborsfield	Drake	Hubbard
Asquith	Driver	Humboldt
Assiniboia	Duck Lake	Idylwild
Bapaume	Dundurn	Imperial
Belbutte	Dundurn	Indian Head
Benson	East Cut Knife	Ituna
Big Beaver	Eastend	Kamsack
Big River	Edam	Kenaston
Biggar	Edenwold	Kendal
Birch Hills	Endeavor	Kindersley
Bladworth	Englefield	Kisbey
Blaine Lake	Ethelton	Kolin
Blucher	Eye brow	Lac Vert
Bonne Madone	Fairview	Lacadena
Bredenbury	Flaxcombe	Lake Lenore
Bresaylor	Floral	Landis
Brokenshell	Foam Lake	Lashburn
Brookview	Fort Pitt	Laurier
Buchanan	Fort Pelly	Leask
Buckland	Fox Valley	Leinan
Burnham	Friedensfeld School	Leoville
Cabri	District	LeRoy
Candle Lake	Frontier	Liberty
Canwood	Garrick	Limerick
Caron	Glamis	Lintlaw
Cherry Ridge	Golden Prairie	Livelong
Choiceland	Griffin	Lloydminster
Climax	Grosswerder	Look Out School
Codette	Handel	Loon Lake
Colonsay	Harris	Loreburn
Conquest	Harrisland	Love
Consul	Hawarden	Luseland
Craik	Hawkeye	Luseland
Crooked River	Hazlet	MacDowall
Cypress Hills	Heart's Hill	Macklin

Maidstone	Robinson Creek School	Willowbrook
Marcelin	District	Witchekan
Margo	Rosthern	Wymark
Maymont	Rural Municipality of	Yellow Creek
Mayview	King George	Yellow Grass
McKague	Rural Municipality of	Young
Meadow Lake	Weyburn	Zelma
Meeting Lake	Saltcoats	
Meota	Semans	
Milden	Shamrock	
Minnehaha	Shipman	
Miry Creek	Snipe Lake	
Mistatim	Southminster	
Mortlach	Spiritwood	
Muenster	Springside	
Mullingar	St. Benedict	
Naicam	St. Brieux	
Newcombe	St. Laszlo	
Nipawin	St. Louis	
Orkney	Stewart Valley	
Oxbow	Stranraer	
Paddockwood	Strasbourg	
Paradise Hill	Sylvania	
Parkside	Tarnpol	
Pathlow Region	Teo Lake	
Patriot School District	Tiger Hills	
Pennant School District	Tompkins	
Perdue	Tramping Lake	
Phippen	Turtleford	
Pleasant Valley	Tway	
Pleasantdale	Val Marie	
Plenty	Vanguard	
Porcupine Plain	Victory	
Preeceville	Viscount	
Prud'Homme	Vonda	
Punnichy	Waitville	
Qu'Appelle	Wakaw	
Quill Lake	Warman	
Quinton	Waseca	
Rabbit Lake	Welland	
Radville	Whelan	
Raymore	White Fox	
Richard	Wild Rose	
Richmound	Wilkie	



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